



**University and College Union**

# Future Nottingham Phase 2 counterproposal

Part 2: Unit Level Analysis

Submitted by the University and College Union (UCU)

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## Executive Summary

This document brings together a series of unit-level counterproposals developed in response to the University's *Future Nottingham 2* (FN2) proposals. Collectively, these proposals demonstrate that there are credible, locally-informed alternatives to a programme that currently threatens the equivalent of **609 FTE compulsory redundancies**, alongside sweeping changes to how Schools and Professional Service units operate both individually and collectively.

Unlike the University's business case, these counterproposals have been developed **from the bottom up**. They represent the work of a network of UCU activists, School representatives and members working collaboratively with colleagues across the University to identify realistic alternatives that protect both the University's long-term financial sustainability and its core teaching and research mission.

The proposals reflect the expertise of those who understand their Schools and units best. They identify opportunities to improve efficiency, generate additional income, reduce non-pay expenditure, make better use of estates, strengthen recruitment and retention, and improve organisational effectiveness without resorting to compulsory redundancies or unnecessary damage to academic provision. They also offer alternative academic and organisational visions that better support education, research, collegiality and the long-term success of the University.

The level of detail inevitably varies between Schools and units. In a number of areas, activists have been able to produce highly detailed, evidence-based proposals with quantified financial savings and clear implementation plans. In others, limited time, resources and local capacity have constrained the level of analysis that has been possible. This should not be interpreted as an absence of viable alternatives. Rather, it reflects the unequal resources available to UCU during the consultation process. UCU therefore regards this document as a living body of work and leaves open the possibility of further detailed counterproposals being developed in those areas where additional work remains possible. We welcome member input in this regard.

These unit-level counterproposals should be read alongside [Part 1 of UCU's FN2 counterproposal](#), which sets out an alternative strategy for achieving the University's financial objectives without compulsory redundancies through changes to institutional financial planning, capital investment, non-pay expenditure, income generation and governance. This companion volume complements that work by demonstrating how those principles can be translated into practice within individual Schools and Professional Service units, drawing on the expertise and experience of staff with detailed local knowledge.

Given the uneven level of detail that has been possible across Schools and units, it would not be appropriate to aggregate the financial savings identified in this volume or seek to reconcile them directly with the headline figures presented in the University-wide counterproposal. Some submissions contain detailed, costed proposals with quantified savings, while others necessarily focus on strategic alternatives, operational improvements and protecting academic provision, with further financial

analysis still to be developed. In addition, there are areas where local proposals overlap with institution-wide measures already captured in the University-wide financial counterproposal, meaning that aggregation would risk both double counting and misrepresenting the scale of the overall package. These documents are therefore intended to be complementary rather than additive. Together, they present a coherent alternative vision for the future of the University: one that combines a credible institution-wide financial strategy with locally developed plans that protect teaching, research and the student experience.

Despite differences in emphasis between Schools and units, several common themes emerge consistently throughout these submissions:

- Protecting teaching quality, research capacity and the student experience by avoiding compulsory redundancies.
- Prioritising natural attrition and voluntary measures over imposed staffing reductions.
- Reducing unnecessary non-pay expenditure before cutting frontline staff.
- Generating sustainable new income through improved recruitment, commercial activity and external partnerships.
- Improving space utilisation and estates efficiency.
- Strengthening local decision making by devolving greater responsibility and resources to Schools within a more appropriately federated University structure.
- Protecting academic breadth and disciplinary expertise while improving long-term financial sustainability.
- Recognising that the University's greatest asset is its staff, and that lasting financial sustainability depends upon maintaining morale, reputation and the capacity to deliver world-leading teaching and research.

Taken together, these unit-level counterproposals demonstrate that meaningful financial savings, operational improvements and new opportunities for growth can be achieved while preserving the University's greatest asset—its people. They provide practical alternatives developed by those with first-hand knowledge of local operations and deserve serious consideration as part of any genuine consultation over the future of the University.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

UCU understands the importance of complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This involves an in depth consideration of the impact of any change on people with protected characteristics **before** any decisions are made. UCU is willing to work together with UoN EDI teams to develop meaningful and comprehensive Equality Impact Assessments to support decision making that ensures considerable attention to enabling equity of opportunity for all colleagues throughout all FN2 processes.

### **Clarification Regarding Staffing Assumptions**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

# Alternative Proposals for Sustainability: Unit Level Analysis

## Faculty of Arts

### Department of American and Canadian Studies

#### Overview

The Department of American Studies has long been the largest and most respected unit in the UK solely dedicated to the study of North American literature, culture, history and politics. At the start of this decade it had a 30% market share, and enrolled circa 140 FTE students per year. In REF 2021 it achieved one of the best outcomes both nationally and across the entire University (3<sup>rd</sup> out of 24 in Area Studies, which covers multiple areas of geographical specialization, with 94.9% of its outputs at 4\*/3\*).

This prominence and prestige meant it had been better able to weather a steadily declining student interest in interdisciplinary “American Studies” degrees than the rest of the sector, which has seen the disaggregation of all but one of the many other Departments of American Studies that existed in the 2010s and redeployment of their staff into units such as English, History, and Politics. But with the last three years showing the Department at Nottingham now also clearly feeling the impact of this waning market, it is the right moment for it to follow a similar path by relocating its staff and rebranding its most viable programmes.

Accordingly, the Department proposes:

- closing three of its five programmes;
- rearranging the current American Studies and English programme as a degree in “English and American Literature and Culture” and resituating it in the future Department of English within the new College structure;
- rearranging the current American Studies and History programme as a degree in “American and World History” and resituating it in the future Department of History within the new College structure.

Rehousing two of the Department’s most sustainable programmes in other units that have a clearer disciplinary identity than “American Studies,” where they will be badged as more discipline-specific than at present, will enable the new-look degrees to access parts of the UG market previously closed off to them.

This will result in a return to stable and financially viable recruitment numbers, alongside:

- significant organizational efficiencies achieved through closure of the Department as a stand-alone administrative unit and a voluntary reduction in staff numbers;
- obvious benefits to other continuing units in the Arts by adding currently absent US-focused content to their market offerings and outstanding research to their REF profiles;

- boosting KPIs in the Arts and university league table standings through better and more clearly aligning US-focused teaching, research, and metrics with institution-wide goals.

### Summary of FN2 proposals

FN2 proposes:

- Closure of all five currently suspended programmes in American Studies
- Removal of all 8.8 FTE staff in American Studies by 2027/28

### Risks of FN2 proposals

*1. The FN2 proposals are not informed by an understanding of wider changes in the market for US-focused teaching and the opportunities for Nottingham arising from these.*

As identified above, the current restructuring offers an opportunity to productively and profitably reset the delivery of US-focused teaching at Nottingham.

The primary reason given for the closure of all “American Studies” programmes is low current and projected demand. This is a fair judgement when these programmes are viewed as located within the interdisciplinary “American Studies” market (890 applicants taking up places across the sector in 2023/24; - 37% change on 2020/21). But the Department’s Proposal involves exiting this market and relocating the two programmes we wish to preserve into the significantly larger, more stable, more sustainable markets for discipline-specific degrees in:

“Literature in English/English Studies” (29,480 combined applicants taking up places across the sector in 2023/24; -5% change on 2020/21)

“History” (38,795 applicants taking up places across the sector in 2023/24; -12% change on 2020/21)

A secondary reason given for the closure of all “American Studies” programmes is that the average tariff of these programmes was below or only matched the university’s wider average tariff. As the pool of potential applicants to interdisciplinary “American Studies” degrees has shrunk, with high-tariff students increasingly migrating to discipline-specific programmes at other universities in order to study US-focused content, the Department’s existing programmes have inevitably had to make greater use of clearing. Since this issue is a direct result of the declining market in interdisciplinary “American Studies” students, it will be directly resolved by transferring the Department’s remaining programmes out of that market.

The relocation of two of the current American Studies programmes with the best tariff history into units that already achieve the highest tariff performance in the Arts will support the greater selectivity and easier tariff management enabled by the changes the Department proposes.

There is particular scope to achieve and exceed the target intakes identified in the Department's Alternative Proposal by strategically marketing its retained programmes to international students. Record numbers of US students are applying to UK universities (a 15% rise in 2024/25), many as a direct result of academic censorship in the US of precisely the material our programmes offer. Similarly, the unsettled educational and immigration situation in the US is deterring large numbers of European and Asian students from applying to university places there (a 17% fall in 2024/25), again opening a gap Nottingham's US-focused teaching and research expertise can fill.

*2. The FN2 proposals will remove an entire area of expertise from the University that is of vital importance to the contemporary world for minimal financial gain.*

While delivering US-focused teaching and research under an "American Studies" model is no longer viable the still dominant influence of the US on current world events, and its outsized impact on contemporary culture, politics, technologies, social issues, and environmental concerns, clearly shows the need for any university making a claim to be an outward-facing, global institution to retain expertise in this area. Students have lost none of their interest in US topics but have instead steadily migrated away from Nottingham into English, History or Politics units at other universities that either already offer US focused content or have assimilated staff from previous Departments of American Studies that have been disaggregated.

The serious disadvantage for Nottingham's School of English and Department of History arising from the current structure is that they offer no US focused teaching provision of their own. This puts them out of sync with all their major Russell Group competitors and the sector more widely, where a wide range of US content is delivered by such units internally. This anomaly is a consequence of the historic concentration of specialist US teaching at Nottingham solely within the Department of American Studies. This model worked effectively for decades but is now a hindrance to the future growth of both US focused programmes and units like English and History.

Simply removing all US focused expertise from Nottingham's Arts provision, as FN2 proposes, will achieve only minimal savings in staff pay (1% of the University's overall target) set against the considerable potential benefits outlined in the Department of American Studies' full Alternative Proposal. Staff numbers in American Studies have already reduced from 17 FTE in 2020/21 to 8.8 FTE in 2025/26, closely in line with falling student numbers over this period. This equates to a saving in annual staff pay of £576,000 across the last four years, to which can be added a further £262,000 per year from additional staff reductions via natural attrition in 2026/27 outlined in the Department's Alternative Proposal.

Under this Alternative Proposal:

- Retaining 2.3 FTE American Studies staff to enable the running of the programme in English and American Literature and Culture will cost the University approx. £215,625 per year in

staff pay going forward not envisaged in the Draft Business Case, set against projected annual net income of £1,835,695 otherwise unrealizable.

- Retaining 3.7 FTE American Studies staff to enable the running of the programme in American and World History will cost the University approx. £346,875 per year in staff pay going forward not envisaged in the Draft Business Case, set against projected annual net income of £3,126,043 otherwise not realizable.

Preserving some key elements of US focused teaching and research will prevent significant reputational damage, significantly improve the ability of Nottingham's Departments of English and History and the wider School of Arts to compete with others in the sector, and maintain the US-focused expertise needed to address global issues and generate stronger cross-unit collaborations.

#### Alternative proposals

The Proposal put forward by the Department of American Studies offers an alternative that fits closely with the FN2 strategy and case for change by:

- resituating the strongest elements of current American Studies provision into new student markets to achieve sustainability;
- relocating this provision into larger units to achieve administrative and structural simplifications and efficiencies;
- fully integrating American Studies teaching and research excellence into these larger units in order to improve their offering and appeal;
- right-sizing and redistributing the current staff base in American Studies to meet the expected SSR.

The Department of American Studies will meet these goals, and address current issues around demand and tariff, by rebranding and relocating its two strongest recruiting degrees, which have clear capacity for sustainable recruitment following these changes:

- American Studies staffing reduces from 8.8 FTE to 6 FTE, a 32% cut, through voluntary redundancy and if necessary movement onto fractional contracts.
- Three of the five American Studies programmes that have been suspended will be closed: American and Canadian Studies (T704); Politics and American Studies (TL72); Film and Television Studies and American Studies (TW76).
- The programmes currently badged as American Studies and English (QT37) and American Studies and History (TV71) will be retained and moved respectively into units consisting of programmes the current School of English and Department of History already offer.

- These two existing programmes will be rebranded with more specific disciplinary markers (e.g. English and American Literature and Culture, American and World History) and become Single Honours rather than Joint Honours degrees.
- As a result these existing programmes are extracted from the declining market for interdisciplinary “American Studies” degrees and oriented to the much larger, more robust markets for discipline-specific “Literature in English” and “History” degrees.
- The Department as an independent administrative unit will close and American Studies staff, who already work in the disciplinary areas of English and History will be redeployed to those units to deliver these refreshed programmes alongside other teaching/research commitments.
- The administrative transition to this new structure will take place over 2026/27, as the current Department phases out its last cohort of existing students, meaning it is in place for the launch of the new College structure in 2027/28.
- During the two year transition to full student cohorts on the rebranded and relocated programmes ex-American Studies staff will also offer their US-focused modules to students on other English and History programmes, provide selected US content within survey modules currently running in English and History, and draw on their extensive interdisciplinary teaching experience to service modules on the cross-School of Arts Engaged Arts strand.
- The rebranded programme in English and American Literature and Culture, once at a conservatively estimated full capacity of 105 students across three year groups, will be delivered by 2.3 FTE former American Studies staff and 2.3 FTE existing staff from English. This equals minimum SSR of 22.8 per staff member.
- The rebranded programme in American and World History, once at a conservatively estimated full capacity of 180 students across three year groups, will be delivered by 3.7 FTE former American Studies staff and 3.7 FTE existing staff from History. This equals minimum SSR of 24.3 per staff member.
- Each of these two rebranded programmes will operate at a controllable margin above 65% and provide net surpluses above 25%. Together they will generate net income of £4.9 million per year and net profit of above £1.4 million per year which would otherwise be lost, set against significantly reduced staff and administrative costs compared to the programmes they are replacing.

Fully modelled details of this income generation, and related efficiencies, based on previous financial data for the Department, appear in Section 2 of the Department’s Alternative Proposal. Information on

the clearly defined scope of the proposed changes, the feasibility of their swift delivery, and the advantages they would bring to the University as whole appears in Sections 3, 4 + 5 of this Proposal.

Overall, this Alternative Proposal meets the goals of Future Nottingham Phase 2 in multiple ways:

- **Boosting student recruitment and ensuring sustainable programme growth**, by allowing the strongest American Studies degrees to adjust to shifts in the market.
- **Delivering stronger performance against competitors**, by deploying staff and programmes in ways that newly align with the sector norms for US focused teaching provision.
- **Concentrating resources in growth areas**, by using American Studies staff to drive expansion in other units.
- **Boosting University league table performance**, by better aligning US focused programmes with the metrics and identifiers used in compiling these.
- **Correcting unit sizes and shapes**, by aligning Staff Student Ratios with the University's targets in ways that benefit other units.
- **Creating administrative and financial efficiencies and generating revenue**, by merging US-focused programmes into larger units which fit the new College structure.
- **Increasing student choice while streamlining the overall number of modules**, by allowing much wider access to highly appealing modules with a US focus at the same time as thinning current American Studies programmes and their range of module offerings.
- **Increasing flexibility in teaching delivery and cross-unit collaboration**, by drawing on the extensive and distinctive interdisciplinary experience of American Studies staff.
- **Removing parallel structures and internal competition**, by resituating American Studies staff directly alongside others who share their disciplinary identity.
- **Enhancing Staff and Student Inclusivity**, by retaining teaching and research uniquely tailored to issues around race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability.
- **Sustaining and enhancing research excellence**, by preserving and building on the outstanding REF profile of American Studies staff.

Detailed Business Cases for each of the two programmes that American Studies staff are proposing to retain and refresh are appended to their Alternative Proposal, providing additional information on these areas: Programme Outline; Strategic Development; Programme Delivery and Content.

#### Estimated non-staff savings

#### Estimated non-staff savings by 2029/30:

##### Measure

##### Annual Saving

Lost income retained through growth in rebranded and relocated UG programmes

£5 million

Operational efficiencies achieved through closing Department and consolidating staff into larger units £100,000 to £200,000

**Estimated staff savings without redundancy**

**Estimated staff reduction from natural attrition by 2029/30:** 2.8 FTE by 2026/27 (32% of current staff)

**Estimated annual saving:** £262,000 (32% of current staff pay roll)

**Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## Department of Culture, Media and Visual Studies

### Overview

The core overall mission of CMVS is to draw on and shape Arts and Humanities frameworks to produce impactful research, KE and teaching that engages (but also enables others to engage) with the increasingly complex and technologized cultural, creative, and media environments of the present and emerging global future, in an historically informed, active, critical, and ethically sensitive way. Key areas of expertise include:

- The impacts of technological change (including AI) on journalism, creative labour and audience experiences of media and screen content
- Sustainability, green production, and the climate crisis
- Cultural flows and diversity in the context of migration, globalisation, and decolonisation
- Screen and cultural industries' practices (including virtual and immersive digital production)
- Links between social media and weakening institutions of democracy
- Art and critical visual literacy in an era of mediated and monetised visual culture.

The Department maintains a healthy recruitment of home and international students at UG, PGT, and PGR levels, consistently exceeding its targets. International recruitment is a particular strength (28% of current UG, 91% of current PGT, and 46% of current PGR students are international). This recruitment is aided by the department's integration with UoN's tri-campus structure, industry connections in the cultural and creative sectors, interdisciplinary research and teaching that is global in outlook and unique employability opportunities in the only Hollywood-based internships available to UK students.

Based on 2025-26 numbers, CMVS brings in in excess of £6.8 million p.a. in international and home student fees (a departmental surplus of £4 million p.a.), as well as further income from exchange students (64 in 2025-26) and the management of UNNC and UNMC exam boards in CMVS subjects. This department makes a substantial financial contribution to UoN, and can only continue to do so through maintaining, if not increasing, numbers of staff. There is currently one vacancy that will not be filled and the department lost 7.7FTE posts in the 24/25 academic year. Current staffing levels are already placing significant pressure on staff resources and PGR recruitment, as well as grant capture. Even at current staffing levels, CMVS returns a healthy surplus, but this surplus is at risk from reduced staffing.

The University's return to the Global Top 100 is a recruitment signal of direct relevance to CMVS, which draws approximately 35% of its students from international markets where institutional ranking is a primary driver of choice. A significantly higher SSR risks damaging this international reputation and consequently international student recruitment.

CMVS is also a *primary architect* of the University's knowledge exchange and creative industries agenda. It hosts four research centres and four KE and impact clusters directly relevant to the creative economy, already building the non-academic partnerships that UKRI/EMCCA IS8 and post-16 white paper priorities require, and leads the Virtual and Immersive Production Studio, a unique physical infrastructure for internal research and external KE & industry collaboration. CMVS colleagues lead the University's

Creative and Digital Research Cluster, City as Lab and the East Midlands Universities Creative Industries Forum, the institutional vehicles through which humanities expertise in screen industries, digital culture, immersive technology, media, visual culture, and creative economies connects to IS8 creative industries funding priorities.

#### Summary of FN2 proposals

FN2 proposes:

- Reduction in academic roles from 31.3 FTE (including one vacancy) to 22.3 FTE.
- Reduction of 9 FTE.
- Reduction from 31 employees to 24.
- Removal of 8 occupied posts plus one vacant role.
- Reorganisation into the School of Arts, as part of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

#### Risks of FN2 proposals

##### *1. Inadequate staffing to enable strategic growth areas as a result of curriculum redesign*

CMVS is currently operating within the target SSR range, at 1:18, having lost 9 (7.7 FTE) fixed-term posts in 2025. Colleagues are burdened with a high workload, an average of 113%. The projected SSR of 1:16 for 26/27 appears to assume that our student numbers will decline to 448 (or to 501, if the vacancy is included), based on sensitivity to tariff, but there are many reasons to expect instead an increase, especially now that the university has returned to the Global Top 100 that we know to be crucial for international recruitment. The new undergraduate programmes and curriculum redesign were devised specifically to appeal to new markets, including Latin America and Africa. An SSR of *above* the maximum of the target range (1:22.4) presents a severe risk to that potential expansion, and indeed to the quality of delivery even at the current or lower student numbers. The high proportion of international students also adds to staff workload to ensure quality of student experience. The department is currently at a crucial point of delivery of the new curriculum, having just completed delivery of the Year 1 redesign. Colleagues are currently both developing the new curriculum while also teaching out the old curriculum. Any loss in staff would be substantially disruptive, risking an inability to deliver either or both curricula and jeopardising the sustainability of the four new programmes.

##### *2. Inadequate staffing to accommodate the knock-on effects of closures across the School*

Liberal Arts students currently account for 98 module enrolments on CMVS modules, the equivalent of around 16 FTE students. This accounts for 10% of Liberal Arts students' optional module enrolments. However, the subject areas proposed for closure—especially American and Canadian Studies; Modern Languages and Cultures; Music; Theology—constituted 22.7% of the Liberal Arts course this year, and through the period of teach-out, students will be selecting from progressively fewer modules, with CMVS modules forming a larger proportion of the offer. CMVS modules are popular with Liberal Arts students - in 25/26 there are Liberal Arts students on 25 of the 28 modules offered - so it is inevitable that CMVS staff will be teaching far more Liberal Arts students should the proposed closures go ahead.

### *3. Inadequate staffing to maximise international PGR market share*

CMVS averages 17 PGR applicant queries per month, almost exclusively from prospective international students. Maintaining PGR (as well as PGT) provision to international students is undermined by the proposed cuts to the department's staffing.

Alternative proposals

#### *1. Market Diversification*

CMVS's interdisciplinary UG, PGT and PGR portfolio and research profile give it specific advantages in diversifying into new markets including South and Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Gulf States and Latin America. The curriculum redesign has an explicit focus on globalising UG provision and each of these markets has a proven ties and interest in UK and European creative industries, which will further appeal to international students. CMVS will develop new marketing strategies to increase student intake from these areas.

#### *2. Expanded PGT provision*

The Department currently offers three PGT programmes but are keen to develop further programmes in AI, Media and Society, Heritage and the Creative Economy and Screen Production Studies. These programmes will be designed with appeal to the global market and take advantage of the department's links to the local and national creative industries and facilities such as the Virtual and Immersive Production Studio. This expansion would be impossible if current staffing levels and expertise are reduced.

#### *3. Provision of critical AI studies across UoN*

The department will develop new UG and PGT modules focused on developing AI literacy skills that are embedded in a humanist, critical framework and is conscious of the ethical and environmental implications of AI use. These modules could be offered to students from across the university as an essential part of the university's proposal to embed critical AI skills across all programmes. They would involve additional teaching workload and so would require maintaining current staffing levels.

#### *4. CPD and Professional Development Portfolio*

The Department will develop revenue-generating short courses and leadership programmes in cultural industries-sector relevant areas, including:

- AI and the Creative Industries: Understanding and Managing Disruption (for cultural sector professionals, media executives, arts administrators)
- Leadership in Cultural Organisations: Strategy, Finance, and Impact (the 'missing business school' for creative curators, gallery directors, festival managers)
- Green Screen: Sustainable Production for Film and TV (for screen industry professionals; aligned with industry-wide sustainability commitments)

- Visual Literacy for the Digital Age (for educators, communications professionals, journalists; high volume potential)
- Heritage Site Management and Interpretation (for museum, heritage, and local authority professionals; aligned with regional sector needs)

*5. Further development of grant capture from both academic and creative industry sources.*

The department will build on existing expertise in grant capture to increase income from external sources through partnerships and funding bids to RCUK, British Academy, Leverhulme and creative industry funding sources.

Estimated staff savings without redundancy

**Estimated staff reduction from natural attrition by 2029/30:** 2–3 FTE reduction through retirement and voluntary departure over 3 years, based on known demographic profile of department. These are **in addition to** a current vacancy that will not be filled, a colleague departing UoN in August 2026, and the 7.7 FTE fixed-term posts CMVS lost in 2025.

**Estimated annual saving:**

Natural attrition and not filling the current vacancy would lead to a saving between approximately 400k-500 p.a. without any resulting negative impact to income from student fees and research grants, something that a reduced workforce would make inevitable.

**Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of English

### Overview

The School of English is a world-leading research and teaching unit with a distinctively broad, skills-based curriculum spanning Modern Literature, Medieval Language and Literature, Linguistics, Drama, and Creative Writing. The School significantly outperforms the University in the QS World (58<sup>th</sup>), *Guardian* (18<sup>th</sup>) and *Times* (10<sup>th</sup>) ranking systems. It is the largest and most successful unit of its kind in the East Midlands. It returns 55% of income to the central institution in subsidy under the contribution system. The international reach of the School means it makes a significant contribution to institutional reputational surveys for the QS World Rankings. The School ranks as one of the strongest at Nottingham in terms of school controllable margin. In its current form, English is a highly successful, economically viable unit.

In research, the School has 42.1 FTE research-active staff who are eligible to contribute to the Research Excellence Framework. In the most recent REF, English were ranked 10<sup>th</sup> nationally overall, 9<sup>th</sup> in research power, and 8<sup>th</sup> in research impact. 53.2% of outputs and a very strong 75% of impact case studies in School were rated 4\*. QR income derived from English research activity in the most recent REF amounts to £1,017, 479 per annum, approximately £7,100,000 over the REF cycle. Research from the School is highly influential: 27.6% of English outputs from 2022-24 are in the top 10% cited (field-weighted). English has a strong record of external funding, grant capture, and impact. Since 2019/20, the School has brought in £2,858,541 of grant money, a competitive total for an Arts unit of its size. The School supervises 92.5 FTE of postgraduate research students, of whom 42.5 FTE are international students.

The School's teaching profile across language and literature makes it both well-placed to deliver a skills-based curriculum for a domestic market and highly attractive to international students with an interest in linguistics and intercultural communication. At the most recent census point available on Tableau, the School has 500 FTE (375 SH and 250 JH) home and 61 FTE (58 SH and 6 JH) FTE international undergraduate students, including via its successful 2+2 programmes with UNNC. At postgraduate taught level, the School has 26.5 registered FTE home and 202 FTE international on-site PGT students; in addition, the School has 90 FTE home and 60 FTE international students registered on its postgraduate Distance Learning programme (Tableau: Student Numbers by Academic Plan). It provides curriculum content for a further 257 students on the BA Liberal Arts. In terms of NSS outcomes, English ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Russell Group for all questions and has the highest NSS scores for feedback in the Russell Group (Tableau: NSS Summary); it is the fourth-highest scoring NSS unit in the University of Nottingham. In the only Teaching Excellence Framework to date, the School was awarded Gold. English graduates from Nottingham outperform national averages for English in terms of employment or further study (90% to 85%) and starting salary (£27,023 to £21,300) (HESA).

As the above numbers show, the School of English is a destination unit for undergraduate and postgraduate study both domestically and internationally. The recruitment landscape for English is improving from a stable base, grounded in the mandatory GCSE in English at secondary schools in England and subsequent conversion into A-level students:

- Applications to English UG programmes are up year on year from 2024 to 2025 (+12.1%) and from 2025 to 2026 (+9.8%) with a similar rise in firm acceptances (Tableau). A-level English enrolments experienced a decline to 2022 (56,913), but since then numbers have held steady with stronger numbers in 2024 particularly (60,706) (JCQ via English Association).
- The government's Curriculum and Assessment Review white paper makes provision for improvements in the delivery of A-level English Language. As one of the few English units in the UK providing joint literature and language specialism, the School will be well-placed to take advantage of the expected increase in A-level enrolments in the medium to longer term.
- Applications to English PGT programmes are very healthy and are predominantly international fee-paying students (89% of 301 acceptances for 2026/27 entry are international students) (Tableau). Although applications and acceptances are down from a historic peak in 2024/25, international PGT recruitment remains strong compared to sector norms.
- Applications to English PGR degrees remain strong, particularly international students. The School has 71 international applications to date for a 2026/27 start, commensurate with the past two years and a significant increase on 2023/24 (47 applications) (Tableau).

English is well-placed to support the University's objective of raising overall tariff. The average tariff entry for English has approximated that for the University as a whole to 2023/24 (FN2 Business Case); our single-honours programmes have a standard AAB tariff; JH programmes range from AAA to ABB.

As part of the institutionally mandated Curriculum Transformation Programme and latterly Curriculum Nottingham, English has designed a new curriculum starting with a new intake in 2026/27. This has involved the rationalisation of module offering, resulting in greater efficiencies in delivery, timetabling, and estate requirements, and a greater emphasis on consistent skills development, speaking to contemporary recruitment priorities that will have a positive impact on recruitment in the medium term. The new curriculum is in step with FN2 ambitions to '[align] offering and staffing with student demand for high-quality courses and excellent student experience and outcomes' (12).

English is a financially successful keystone subject at the University, that represents both a historical mainstay of a Russell Group research-intensive university and a frontier of innovative teaching and research practice. It has a long history of delivering exceptional teaching and research, and an excellent long-term prognosis.

### Summary of FN2 proposals

FN2 proposes:

- Reduction of academic staffing from 47.93 FTE to 30.43 FTE effective from 2026/27, constituting a reduction of 36.5% of staff.
- Removal of 18.5 FTE overall, including one vacancy.
- Headcount reduction from 49 employees to 33 employees.
- Stated SSR increase from 14.1 to 22.7 effective from 2026/27.

- Objective to ‘achieve a more balanced distribution of staffing across subject areas, aligned with students’ module choices’.
- Reorganisation into a Department within the new School of Arts in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

## Risks of FN2 proposals

### *1. Proposed cuts and timeframes risk the operational unviability of English*

The proposed cuts in the FN2 Business Case are targeted at a unit where colleagues are already working over capacity. Workload average in the unit has increased steadily in the recent past, from 105% in 2023/24 to 108% in 2024/25 and 109% in 2025/26.

A 36.5% reduction in FTE from English staff will mean that the forthcoming launch of a new curriculum in 2026/27, predicated on current staffing levels, cannot be delivered as advertised to students, meaning the institution will not be compliant with Competition and Markets Authority rules. The University invested substantial resources in the Curriculum Transformation Project between 2022 and 2024; the scale and speed of cuts applied to English based on the FN2 proposal will invalidate the basis for the redesigned curriculum, writing off the investment in curriculum transformation, market research, staff and student co-creation, and programme development that informed and produced it.

English currently hosts 92.5 FTEs of postgraduate research students, of whom 42.5 are international fee-paying students, many with recourse to external funding bodies including governmental funding sources. The proposed staffing reduction will mean the loss of supervisory specialism and unsustainable supervision workload for staff who remain in the School, threatening the delivery of PGR supervision and institutional reputation with funding providers.

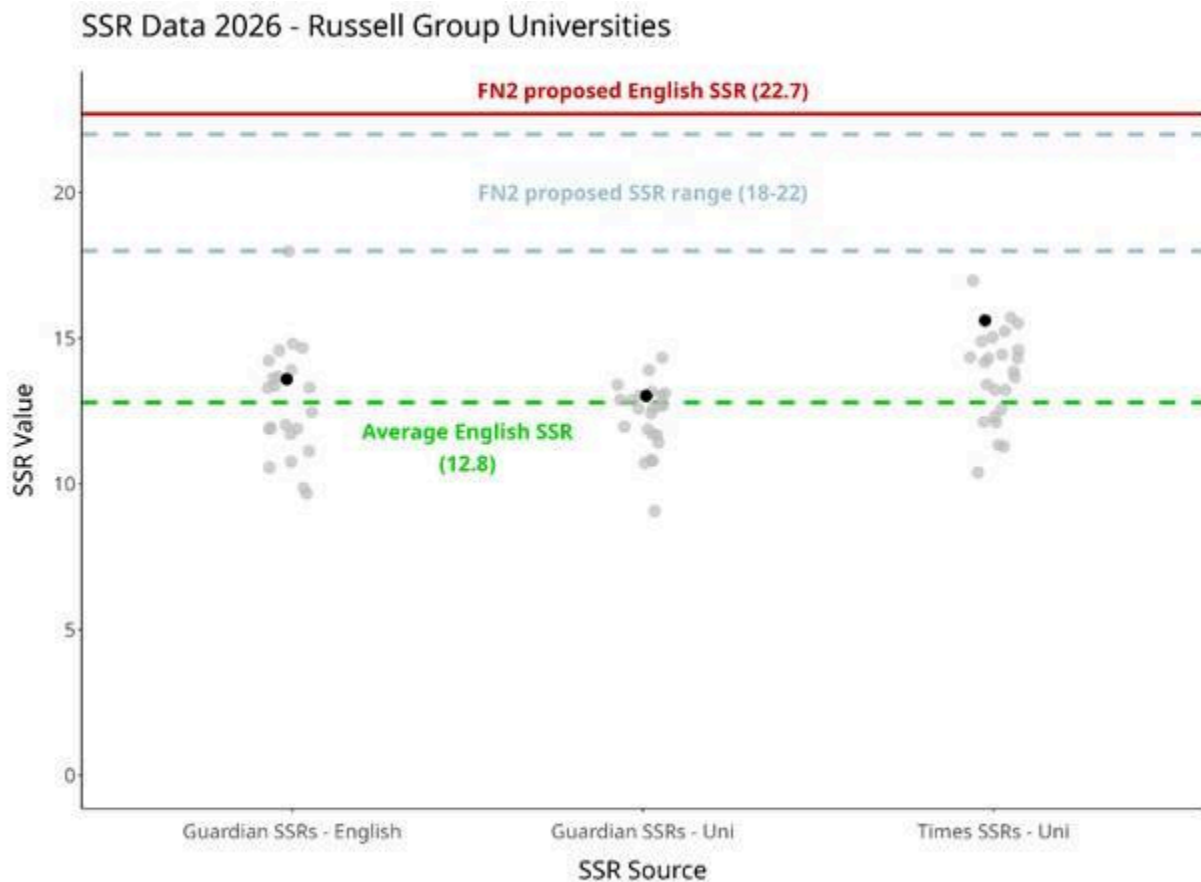
Future Nottingham proposes a change in the School’s administrative structure and role within the institution, moving from a School within the Faculty of Arts to a Department within a new School of Arts. This will necessitate substantial adaptation, new ways of working, new committee structures, new relationships, and new role profiles for APM staff. This is a compounding risk factor which places further pressure on the functioning of the unit.

In sum, the proposed loss of staff entailed by FN2 creates a serious risk of the degradation of teaching quality, breaching of CMA compliance, loss of supervisory capacity, damage to research quality and continuity, and administrative instability.

### *2. SSR projections place English in an unsustainable recruitment position compared to direct competitors.*

Domestic recruitment and reputation are a key driver of international student recruitment. Benchmarking SSRs against international competitors is therefore not a legitimate methodology for projecting future recruitment impacts of SSR either domestically or internationally. As shown in the following table, the current proposals will make Nottingham the highest SSR English unit in the Russell

Group, our direct competitors, by a very large margin, with commensurate detrimental impact on league table positions and undergraduate recruitment.



As indicated by the black-dot position, Nottingham English is already competitive in SSR terms with other comparable institutions in the Russell Group, where the average is 12.8. No Russell Group university English unit operates in the proposed 18-22 SSR range, meaning the proposed FN2 SSR of 22.7:1 is dramatically above Russell Group norms. The proposed substantial increase risks damage to research outcomes (and therefore QR income), to current student experience (and consequently, satisfaction metrics), and to future income streams as English becomes a less attractive destination for student recruitment.

English is a benchmark subject for UK higher education, and the School of English has a uniquely broad curriculum that taps into several different recruitment constituencies; its recruitment model is long-term and resilient, with a marked international dimension that has further growth potential. Reducing staffing by 36.5% will necessitate a severe contraction in the range of curricular offering at Nottingham, meaning an overall weakening of the School's unique offer and consequent loss of competitiveness in student recruitment.

### ***3. Major risk to REF success, grant income, and institutional reputation***

The proposals have a significant impact on senior research-active staff: 15 of the 17.5 FTE reductions come from research-active staff members across level 5 (5.5 FTE), 6 (5.5 FTE) and 7 (4 FTE).

This creates significant risks to:

- grant capture
- doctoral supervision
- REF outputs and QR income
- REF impact case studies
- international collaborations

Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> nationally in the most recent REF, the School is a success story in generating research income in the Arts, bringing in £7,100,000 in QR funding over the REF cycle. While Arts research income is proportionally smaller than in STEM subjects, research success is a driver of institutional reputation and undergraduate recruitment. Significant staffing reductions risk diminishing the University's signature research strengths in interdisciplinary English studies, which will in turn damage reputation for research excellence, which is a primary driver of recruitment, particularly in international postgraduate study. The loss of research revenue associated with the proposed cut to English has not been adequately modelled in the FN2 financial case. The proposed contraction in the School's research activity will reduce overall institutional income rather than improve sustainability.

### ***4. FN2 calculus does not accurately represent actual research and teaching activity in the university***

As the UCU December 2025 report on SSR methodology has documented, the University's internal SSR calculations rely on:

- a single July payroll snapshot that does not reflect actual teaching capacity across the year;
- student FTE allocated using a partially historic Load Matrix rather than actual teaching demand;
- grant-funded staff counted in the denominator even where they are contractually unavailable for teaching.

A further methodological problem is the treatment of postgraduate taught (PGT) students as equivalent to undergraduates for SSR purposes. English is an intensive teaching unit which has a large (228.5 FTE) number of PGT students, many of whom are international students. PGT students complete 180 credits over a full year compared to 120 credits for UG students and require a more intensive level of supervision and specialist input. The UCU December 2025 report recommends that each PGT student be counted as 1.5 FTE for SSR purposes. Applying this adjustment to English's PGT cohort would further increase the apparent SSR and widen the gap between the University's internal figures and sector norms.

These methodological problems systematically overstate apparent surplus capacity and produce internal figures that are not directly comparable to the league table data against which the University benchmarks itself externally.

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In summary, Future Nottingham 2 proposes a radical reduction in staffing in English that directly coincides with the launch of an institutionally mandated new curriculum and a significant restructuring of the administrative form of the unit. This is in the context of the damage to reputation caused by the wider degradation of Arts teaching and research in the institution, with concomitant impact on the School's ability to recruit students. There is clear evidence that such changes, far from improving economic efficiency, will impede the School's ability to conduct the core business of the University: teaching and research. The proposals will reduce overall economic activity at the University and threaten to precipitate a loop wherein projected student recruitment loss becomes the justification for cuts, which damage recruitment prospects, leading to a rationale for more cuts.

### **Alternative proposals**

Even though English is a sustainable unit that contributes significantly to the economic health of the University of Nottingham, UCU recognises that the current financial circumstances confronting the institution require further efficiencies. UCU acknowledges the University's genuine financial pressures and does not propose maintaining the current SSR. UCU proposes a phased change to achieve a target SSR of 18:1, derived from a longer-frame sample size and recruitment projection to provide more accurate expected student numbers. This figure is above every Russell Group institution in the national table for English, and above the sector average of 16.5 for all 72 ranked institutions. It represents a genuine and significant financial concession, and cannot reasonably be characterised as an attempt to resist change. At the same time, an SSR of 18:1 keeps the department at the top end of the range of institutions that remain competitive and academically credible in this subject. The University's proposed 22.7:1 target is without precedent in the Russell Group and would place Nottingham in the company of non-research-intensive institutions ranked outside the top 50 for English: Glasgow Caledonian University, in 52<sup>nd</sup> position, has an SSR of 22.9. An SSR of 18:1 is financially honest, sector-evidenced, and achievable. Meanwhile, the School has multiple realistic growth pathways building on its recorded strengths and achievements.

#### ***1. Limit staff reductions to voluntary redundancy and natural attrition***

The scale and speed of cuts to English have already inflicted reputational damage discouraging applications to programmes. They are very likely to lead to an immediate and significant impact to operational delivery which, in turn, is likely to damage future recruitment potential and the economic efficiency of the School. Compulsory redundancy is a destabilising process which will affect all staff, leading to long-term detrimental consequences for the School, and should be avoided. The possibility of job-share and fractional contracts should be made available to colleagues as part of efforts to structure the School appropriately and would enable a reduction in the overall number of FTEs without losing the

research breadth and teaching expertise of colleagues. Rightsizing through a more gradual process with an emphasis on voluntary severance, natural turnover, retirements and vacancy management should be prioritised.

## ***2. Apply a subject-appropriate SSR target of 18:1 for English***

UCU requests that the University formally adopt an SSR target of 18:1 for English, in place of the blanket 22:1 Faculty target.

On the basis of calculations provided as part of the FN2 Business Case, a staffing level of 38.4 FTE, constituting a reduction of 10.53 FTE, would deliver an achievable SSR of 18:1. This ratio is above every Russell Group institution in the Guardian 2026 English Studies table, and above the sector average for all 72 institutions in that table. It therefore represents a genuine concession to the University's financial position. At the same time, it avoids placing Nottingham among the highest SSR of any institution in the national table, which the University's proposed 22.7:1 target would do. An SSR of 18:1 keeps the University within the range of institutions that maintain credible, competitive provision in English, while delivering a reduction of 19.9% in staffing costs.

## ***3. Implementation of new curriculum with timetable for evaluating sustainability of teaching delivery***

The new curriculum for the School of English reduces overall module count and programme complexity, and introduces stable programme learning outcomes and a skills-based approach to learning. This curriculum will result in cost savings to the institution as a result of reduced administration, estates and timetabling costs, and targets higher recruitment as part of a drive towards skills-based teaching as facilitating student development and graduate employment. However, the curriculum has been designed to operate at current staffing levels; minimum viable delivery would require an SSR of 18:1.

The School proposes to implement the new curriculum with a timetable for evaluating sustainability based on programme recruitment, module enrolment, and institutional administrative costs, on the understanding that fulfilling a robust set of key performance indicators is a condition of that implementation.

## ***4. Take advantage of new market opportunities to expand revenue-generating activities***

The School has a track record of entrepreneurship in growing revenues, including highly successful recruitment in international UG and PG, and engagement with external stakeholders for professional skills development. It has identified new market opportunities for revenue generation in these areas:

### **Expand joint provision with UNNC and UNM**

English has operated a successful 2+2 programme with UNNC for over two decades, and in the past eighteen months has commenced working on a 2+1 programme with UNM. These programmes make use of existing modules and are highly efficient to deliver. Changes to educational policy in China,

including the reclassification of English language and literature into the Science and Technology stream, means new market opportunities for growing these programmes further. Estimated revenue:

2026/27:	10-20 students	£230,000 - £460,000
2027/28:	18-35 students	£403,000 - £805,000
2028/29:	25-50 students	£600,000 - £1,200,000

**Total: £1,233,000 - £2,465,000**

### **Launch taught PhD programme**

Competitor institutions currently operate taught PhD programmes which allow recruitment from a much larger international student pool. The School proposes to launch our own taught PhD programme to expand considerably our international postgraduate research recruitment, equipping students with the methodological, language and cultural skills required for doctoral study, and minimum three years of tuition income per student. The taught programme, which is delivered via an element of shared provision across the cohort, is a scalable and efficient model of postgraduate teaching and supervision that is well-fitted to current market conditions and the demand for postgraduate research qualifications in developing markets like China and Saudi Arabia:

2026/27:	5-10 students (February)	£386,250 - £772,500
2027/28:	11-22 students	£849,750 - 1,699,500
2028/29:	17-34 students	£1,311,720 - £2,623,440
2029/30:	23-46 students	£1,766,750 - £3,533,500

**Total: £4,314,470 - £8,628,940**

### **Develop external-facing CPD provision**

The Future Nottingham 2 business case highlights that continuous professional development is a target growth area for English, with the planned launch of a University-supported CPD offering in September 2026. The School has an established partnership with Browne Jacobson LLP which has produced bespoke CPD provision targeted at financial services executives. Such packages range from £20,000 to £50,000 per company:

2026/27:	£100,000 - £200,000
2027/28:	£175,000 - £350,000

2028/29:

£225,000 - £450,000

**Total: £500,000 - £1,000,000**

### **Implement a proposed 2+2 arrangement with University College Dublin**

Under the U21 Engagement Plan, English provides part of a suite of new programmes designed to recruit EU students, including the launch of a 2+2 programme in Celtic, Medieval English, Viking and Norse Studies. This programme will make use of specialist teaching on modules currently delivered by the School. Projected recruitment and revenues on the programme as submitted via the Engagement Plan are:

2027/28:	5 students	£275,000
2028/29:	15 students	£825,000
2029/30:	20 students	£1,100,000
<b>Total: £2,200,000</b>		

These figures show that considerable revenue growth is possible in English, with plans already at an advanced stage. The realisation of those plans, however, is contingent on appropriate staffing levels in line with the counter-proposal, and retention of the broad range of expertise that the School currently boasts.

### ***5. Additional staff and non-staff savings***

The School will explore further staff and non-staff savings in order to contribute to the financial imperatives of FN2:

- Further curriculum efficiencies identified in the form of reduced module offering, and the introduction of a larger element of compulsory whole-cohort activities at stages 2 and 3. A streamlined curriculum allows for more precise mapping of skills and outcomes, enabling a clearer and stronger articulation of graduate qualities and employability.
- The voluntary consolidation of estate. English currently occupies two separate portions of office space in the Trent Building. Under UCU's proposal, offices on C-floor will be passed back to the institution and estate solutions for those academics resolved using current A-floor allocation. This will generate estates consolidation opportunities, making savings during the FN2 benefits realisation period.

Reshaping the current offering in English while aiming for staff reductions through voluntary redundancy, retirements, and a vacancy freeze would enable a successful delivery of curriculum and student experience at higher staff-student ratios in the medium term, while avoiding long-term risks to international and domestic student recruitment, research quality and income generation.

### **Estimated staff savings without redundancy**

The principal sustainability gains will be achieved by moving towards a smaller staffing body while improving recruitment outcomes and revenues. Staffing will be reduced under this proposal from 47.93 to 38.4 FTE, leading to a projected SSR of 18:1. The resulting estimated salary savings per year by 2029/30 are **£751,471** (down by 19.9% from current cost of £3,779,250 to £3,027,779), a calculation based on average individual (full) staff cost of £78,849, assuming consistent average salary cost across the current staff FTE of 47.93 and the proposed staff FTE of 38.4.

### **Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## Department of History

### Overview

The Department of History is one of the largest in the country with an undergraduate cohort of 850 students (24/25) and a thriving post-graduate community. Ranked 23rd in REF 2021, the department's research expertise spans 2000 years and covers Africa, America, Asia and Europe. Thematically, the department has strengths in British imperialism, social and cultural history, labour history, gender and sexuality, and political history. The department has strong ties to local history, businesses and heritage, including Nottingham Castle Museum and Wollaton Hall, Boots, and nationally including collaborations with the National Holocaust Centre and the Imperial War Museum. The department holds major grants from AHRC, Wellcome, ESRC, and The Leverhulme Trust, totalling over £5.5 million.

### Summary of FN2 proposals

- Reduction in academic roles by 11.5FTE from 39.64 FTE to 28.14 FTE to align with SSR target of 22.4:1.
- Raising entry tariff from current 143 to UoN average of 149.

### Risks of FN2 proposals

*Loss of disciplinary breadth and diversity leading to declining student recruitment and satisfaction:*

2025 'Decision drivers – offer-holders' on Tableau shows that the top two 'drivers' for Arts applicants are 'Course content (core)' and 'Course content (optional)' respectively. The 2025 'Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Offer-holder Surveys' (Source: Tableau) reveals that 52% of History applicants considered the 'Variety of optional modules offered within my subject area' to be 'very important' when deciding where to apply, against an average of 35% across all subject areas.

*Increase in workload leading to higher risk of workplace stress (WPS) and staff sickness:*

Tableau shows a slightly above average number of staff with declared disabilities in the School as a whole (7.9% SoH versus 7.6% UoN). As the FoA EIA shows, data for caring responsibilities, disability, and neurodiversity – all of which are likely to increase WPS risks - is incomplete.

*Decline in teaching quality due to higher SSRs, which will lead to increase in Black awarding gap, lower NSS scores and a slide down league tables.*

Current Black awarding gap at School level is -51.4 (UoN average is -27.9). Efforts to improve the Black awarding gap in History include mentoring, course diversity, recruitment and retention of Black staff, staff to monitor and keep records. This will not be possible to sustain with greater workloads, a smaller staff body, and higher SSRs.

*Decline in research volume and grant capture due to increase in workloads and lack of course diversity leading to lower REF scores and loss of QR income.*

Research-led teaching forms the basis of History courses at Levels 1 and 2. Course standardisation, lack of course diversity and flexibility ('streamlining') means that fewer staff can link research to teaching which will undermine research outputs.

Alternative proposals

*1. Greater departmental control over recruitment process to increase recruitment:*

Rationale: Recruitment declined markedly when central services took control of recruitment processes and communication. History has always received very positive feedback for Open Days and Experience Days, but personal communication with offer-holders could also drive a much-needed increase in attendance at Experience Days (only about 24% of invitees attend these events). This is essential to convert applications into firm acceptances.

*2. Phased baseline tariff increase from BBC to BBB over a 5-year period and support for local, commuter schools.*

Rationale: 24% of History's intake in 2023/24 had BBB-BBC, any upward shift in the bottom-line tariff would reduce the number of History students; this is the assumption and implicitly the desire in the Consultation document.

However, this is a short-sighted policy that underestimates the shift in student choices towards more local universities and commuting rather than living away from home.<sup>1</sup> Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire have above-average History 'A' Level uptake in England with below-average History provision (particularly in Lincolnshire, which is a 'cold spot'). Keeping tariffs lower for the next three years and working with commuter schools to support their History provision and increase grades will enable us to benefit from this transition to commuting rather than living on campus.

*3. Income generation through summer school provision for adult learners:*

We propose a series of week-long intensive summer courses taught in-house, with potential collaboration with Manuscripts and Special Collections over a month-long period each summer advertised locally and nationally with a residential option. Courses will be based on staff expertise and will include field trips, with the potential to be linked to include assessment that would be credit-bearing, working towards a diploma. Each one-week block would cost an individual £500 (including all teaching materials, lunch and coffee), which is based on similar (but not exactly the same) courses at Keele, Warwick, Oxford and Cambridge. Total revenue would be approximately £20 000.

History is an immensely popular subject across all age ranges as evidenced by the success of history documentaries, historical drama, and particularly podcasts. The Rest is History, Fin vs. History, Empire:

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<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/more-school-leavers-living-at-home-for-university-and-college-study>

World History, Dan Snow's History Hit, You're Dead to Me, In Our Time feature in either the Spotify or Apple (often both) top 100 most-listened to podcasts in the UK – The Rest is History currently sits atop the Apple chart.<sup>2</sup> Yet outside of Oxbridge there are very few history courses for adult learners and those that do exist tend to target international visitors rather than local people. These summer schools would fill a gap in provision in the East Midlands.

#### **Estimated non-staff savings**

Summer school: £20 000 annually.

#### **Estimated staff savings without redundancy**

**Estimated staff reduction from natural attrition by 2029/30:** 4 FTE (39.64 FTE to 35.64 FTE)

**Estimated annual saving:** £125k.

#### **Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/charts> (accessed 01/06/26),  
<https://podcastcharts.byspotify.com/gb/top-podcasts> (accessed 01/06/26).

## School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies

### Note on Staffing Reductions and Compulsory Redundancies

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. **We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the department's future staffing strategy.**

### Evidence for Natural Attrition as the Primary Mechanism

UCU has analysed the University's own data on staff separations (Natural Attrition Model: data by job family and units, provided by the University during consultation). The data covering 2018/19 to 2023/24 shows the following annual average separation rates for CLAS (Cultures, Languages and Area Studies):

Job Family	Total Separations (6 yrs)	Average per Year
Research & Teaching	24	~4.0
Teaching & CL (TCL)	73	~12.2
Research	22	~3.7

Given that MLC accounts for approximately 60-70% of CLAS academic staffing, this implies approximately 10 R&T and 32 TCL/Teaching separations through natural attrition over a four-year period. The MLC-specific reduction needed is from 48.87 FTE (the MLC component of the combined 65.87 FTE total) to the proposed 30 FTE, a reduction of approximately 19 FTE. The full combined figure of 65.87 FTE includes 17 FTE in the Language Centre, which is addressed separately in Part 2. The teach-out period of 2026/27 to 2029/30 therefore provides a realistic window in which natural attrition alone is likely to be sufficient to meet the required MLC reduction, without recourse to compulsory redundancies.

Should natural attrition prove insufficient, UCU would consider voluntary retirement (VR) or a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS) as secondary mechanisms, in accordance with standard employment practice. Compulsory redundancies remain categorically unacceptable to UCU.

### Modern Languages and Cultures (MLC)

The Department of Modern Languages and Cultures includes the sections of French and Francophone Studies; German Studies; Russian and Slavonic Studies; Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies; Translation Studies and the Language Centre. Unlike the other sections, the Language Centre does not

deliver degree courses, but optional modules to students across the university, known as university-wide (or inter-faculty) modules, as well as non-accredited modules (e.g. as part of the Nottingham Advantage Award (NAA) certificate). Due to this distinction and for the purpose of clarity, the acronym MLC will refer to degree course sections in Modern Languages, whereas the Language Centre will be referred to as the LC.

This counterproposal for MLC is submitted independently from, but in conjunction with, the LC counterproposal set out in Part 2 of this document. The two proposals are complementary and mutually reinforcing: the staffing model for MLC depends in part on the continued operation of the LC as the University's primary provider of Language Learning modules, and the LC's financial projections incorporate student FTE from MLC degree programmes. The two proposals should therefore be read together. The MLC counterproposal draws on and develops the alternative proposal submitted by MLC staff on 16 June 2026.

### *Overview*

The Department of Modern Languages and Cultures currently delivers 21 UG degrees, 4 PGT courses, and a PhD in Translation Studies, with a total staff FTE of 65.87, comprising 48.87 FTE in MLC and 17 FTE in the LC, with some staff delivering teaching in both units. The combined student load as of May 2026 is approximately 577 FTE, comprising approximately 437 FTE on MLC degree programmes and 140 FTE taking university-wide language modules through the Language Centre (data source: Tableau, June 2026).

FN2 proposes closure of all MLC degree programmes to new entrants from 2026/27, with phased redundancy of all academic staff by 2029/30. UCU categorically rejects this proposal and presents a financially viable, academically credible alternative.

In line with the Departmental counterproposal, UCU proposes two highly marketable, academically excellent, and sustainable degrees in languages: *Languages and Global Cultures*, and *Languages and Global Cultures with Business*, plus a Joint Honours (JH) curriculum of 60 credits available to be combined with suitable JH partners in the new School of Arts and wider College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The combined annual intake is 100 FTE (plus additional intake for university-wide language study based on current figures).

This represents over 80% fewer modules: from 246 to 43, or 35 (if Language Learning modules are delivered solely by the LC).

This lean and academically robust degree provision will:

- avoid a regional (East Midlands) cold spot in HE Languages
- contribute globally agile graduates to strengthen UoN's alignment with the East Midlands Combined Authority Corporate Plan
- supply qualified graduates to teacher training to maintain the pipeline of qualified teachers to underpin the East Midlands Combined Authority focus on education and skills

- map onto student demand, as illustrated in recent consultation with students in years 1, 2 and 4 of current programmes (conducted June 2026)

As part of this proposal for continued language degree provision, it will also be possible to continue to offer university-wide credit-bearing Language Learning modules.

### *Summary of FN2 Proposals*

- Closure of the department's 21 UG degrees plus the Foundation degrees to new entrants effective 2026/27
- Closure of the department's 4 PGT courses to new entrants from 2028/29
- Closure of the PhD Translation Studies to new entrants from 2027/28
- Closure of all modern languages' modules by 2029/30
- Phased staff redundancies of academic staff between October 2026 and September 2030

### *Risks of FN2 Proposals*

#### **1. SSR Target of 22:1 is not benchmarked against reality**

FN2 proposes an SSR of 22:1 for Arts. Beyond the risks posed by a 22:1 SSR across the university outlined in the [UCU counterproposal to course closure](#) (December 2025, pp. 19-34), this target is also not a credible benchmark for this subject area, as sector evidence demonstrates.

Evidence from the [Guardian University Guide 2026 Languages and Linguistics subject table](#) (the most widely consulted domestic measure of subject-level SSR) demonstrates that an SSR of 22:1 is not achieved by any of the 49 ranked institutions in the UK. The table below summarises the key data:

Measure	SSR
Mean SSR (all 49 institutions)	9.04
Median SSR (all 49 institutions)	8.60
Mean SSR (Russell Group only)	7.93
Median SSR (Russell Group only)	7.50
Highest SSR (any Russell Group institution)	11.3 (Cambridge)
Highest SSR (any institution in the table)	18.8 (Manchester Met, ranked 47th)
Institutions with SSR at or above 22:1	None
UoN current SSR (Guardian 2026)	5.5 (ranked 32nd)

Source: [Guardian University Guide 2026 – Languages and Linguistics](#)

No institution in the subject ranking achieves a 22:1 SSR. An SSR of 22:1 would place UoN above even the highest-ranked institution in terms of student load per staff member, in a subject area where internationally recognised quality benchmarks cluster below 12:1.

## **2. Closure creates a permanent regional cold spot and damages national interests**

The University of Nottingham is the only Russell Group institution in the East Midlands. Closure of all Modern Languages degree provision would create a regional cold spot in higher education language provision across the East Midlands, with no Russell Group alternative for students from the region. This is contrary to the East Midlands Combined Authority Corporate Plan's emphasis on education, skills, and global connectivity.

It would also eliminate a key pipeline of qualified modern languages teachers into East Midlands schools at a time when the national shortage of language teachers is an acknowledged policy concern.

Beyond the East Midlands, there is a growing need for graduates with language competence in the diplomatic and security services as the pool of potential recruits has diminished. A [landmark report by the British Academy from 2013](#) highlighted how the language skills deficit threatens national security and global influence. This situation has become markedly worse in the intervening years (see [Britain's diplomats are monolingual | Unherd](#) and [MI5 advertises for Mandarin speakers to serve in British intelligence, as espionage threat from China grows | The Telegraph](#)). Nottingham teaches the critical languages of Russian and Mandarin, as well as four of the five non-English working languages of the UN. The university is uniquely placed to provide graduates who can serve in the vital and growing spheres of diplomacy and intelligence.

## **3. Misrepresentation of demand**

The FN2 business case focuses on Single Honours enrolments. However, of 767 students on ML degrees in 2024/25 (the last year of full detailed data), only 7% (55 students) chose Single Honours degrees. Nationally, demand for degrees combining languages with social sciences and humanities disciplines is stable, with an increase of 11% in language-with-social-science study in the Russell Group between 2012 and 2021 ([British Academy/UCFL 2022](#)).

## **4. Irreversible loss of academic capacity and REF performance**

The MLC unit achieved 6th place in REF2021 Languages and Linguistics (up from 21st in 2014). Closing the department would permanently foreclose this REF return and eliminate a highly productive research unit. With a volume measure of 26 in REF2021 and a projected R&T path of 12 post-FN2, each R&T member would receive over £50,000 QR funding per year (based on existing annual QR income of £647,000). The total REF benefit including impact case studies and environment is approximately £3.5 million over 7 years.

## **5. The closure proposal undermines the University's own curriculum transformation investment**

The University invested substantial resources in the Curriculum Transformation Project between 2022 and 2024. The redesigned MLC portfolio was accepted by senior management in October 2024 following governance-compliant quality assurance processes. Closing MLC before the redesigned provision has been allowed to operate means writing off the entire investment in curriculum transformation, market research, staff and student co-creation, and programme development that informed and produced it.

UCU submits that a decision to close provision that has only recently been approved and restructured, on the basis of performance data drawn from the old curriculum rather than the new one, is procedurally flawed. The University's own quality assurance processes determined in October 2024 that the redesigned MLC offer was viable and appropriate. FN2 contradicts that determination without providing any assessment of the redesigned curriculum's market potential. UCU's alternative proposal is the mechanism by which that investment can be realised, albeit in a leaner form appropriate to the University's current financial position.

### ***Alternative Proposals***

Language degrees are typically made up of two elements: Language Learning to a high standard (henceforth "LL modules"), and Cultures and Societies modules, relevant to the language(s) studied, from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives ("CS modules").

UCU proposes replacing the existing Modern Languages provision with new, radically leaner provision structured around two streamlined degrees: *Languages and Global Cultures*, and *Languages and Global Cultures with Business* (the latter in collaboration with the Business School, with the endorsement of the Head of Business School, David Park). A Joint Honours strand within the new College structure is also proposed.

### **1. New Degree Structure**

The proposed degrees are built on two elements:

- Language Learning (LL) modules: open to degree students and university-wide, available across all years of study, delivered by the Language Centre.
- Cultures and Societies (CS) modules: cross-cultural and transnational modules shared across languages, reducing the total number of CS modules from 71 (or 103 including single-semester variants) to 15.

The degrees are structured as follows:

- Year 1: Introduction to the disciplines and methods of Languages and Global Cultures
- Year 2: Thematic modules deepening engagement with global cultures, parallel with growing language expertise
- Year 3: Year abroad (20% fees charged)
- Final Year: Specialisation, including a 40-credit capstone project

This model has been validated by external expert endorsement, including from the Lead Fellow for Languages at the British Academy (Prof. Charles Forsdick) and the Chair of the University Council for Languages (Prof. Emma Cayley). The University of Southampton, ranked 1st in the UK for Languages and Linguistics in the Guardian League Table 2026, operates a comparable integrated model ([Study Languages and Linguistics | University of Southampton](#)).

### **2. Apply a subject-appropriate SSR target of 16:1 for Modern Languages**

UCU proposes a target SSR of 1:16 for MLC. This represents a genuine compromise position: it is significantly higher than the mean SSR of comparable Russell Group institutions (7.93:1), and higher than all but three institutions in the 49-institution Guardian league table. It is, however, below the FN2 target of 22:1, which is not reached by any institution in the subject ranking. A 16:1 SSR maintains institutional competitiveness while delivering substantial savings.

Based on projected student FTE of 480 (across four years of the degree cycle, with Year Abroad counted at 20%, c.f. Table 2 below), the required staff FTE at SSR 16:1 is **30 FTE**.

### 3. Staffing Distribution

The 30 FTE would be distributed across two delivery strands: 15 FTE for Cultures and Societies (CS) modules (split between R&T and T&CL tracks), and 15 FTE for Language Learning (LL) modules delivered jointly with the Language Centre. In practice, some staff may teach across both LL and CS modules.

The proposed split between R&T and TCL tracks maintains a sufficient REF-eligible staff base to sustain the Languages and Linguistics return and its associated QR income. Maintaining 15 R&T-focussed staff ensures a robust REF unit, with each R&T staff member attracting over £50,000 in QR income per year. The total REF benefit (QR income, ICS, environment) is approximately £3.5 million over the REF cycle.

#### *Estimated Savings*

Item	Annual Value
Salary saving vs current combined staffing (30 FTE vs 65.87 FTE)	£2,828,314
Projected student fee income (480 FTE students)	£4,576,800
REF QR income	~£647,000
Space savings	£267,500
Total annual benefit (steady state)	~£8,320,000

Salary costs are calculated using the average full staff cost of £78,849 per FTE, assuming consistent average salary cost across 65.87 and the proposed 30 FTE.

These figures demonstrate that the UCU counterproposal for MLC represents a financially sustainable model that generates income rather than simply cutting costs. The annual salary saving of £2,828,314 is achieved without compulsory redundancies, relying instead on natural attrition.

#### *Projected Student Income*

Table 1: Projected student degree (per year); numbers based on analysis of current data and reliable demand

Degree	Annual Headcount	FTE to School
Languages and Global Cultures (Single Honours)	40	40

Languages with Business	60	40
Languages and Global Cultures – Joint Honours	30	15
Liberal Arts*	30	5
Total (per year intake)	160	100

Table 2: Total student load (3 full years of degree study + Year Abroad counted as one-fifth FTE), including university-wide language learning module take-up. Note: the "Headcount across 4 years" column reflects cumulative headcount across all year groups simultaneously enrolled, not an annual intake figure.

Degree across all years	Headcount across 4 years of study	FTE to School (3 years of study + year abroad at 20% of FTE)
Languages and Global Cultures (Single Honours)	160	120+8 = 128
Languages with Business	240	120+8 = 128
Languages and Global Cultures – Joint Honours (with English, History, other partners in new College as deemed desirable)	90	45 + 3 = 48
Liberal Arts*	90	15*
Total (degree study take-up)	<b>480</b>	<b>319</b>

\*25-26 Liberal Arts uptake of MLC and LC modules currently adds 12.75 FTE.

Over a four-year degree cycle (Year 3 abroad counted at 20% FTE), projected total student on a degree FTE to the School = 319.

At current tariff (£9,535 per FTE for UK home tuition fee), projected student fee income is **£3,041,665**.

#### **Additional Income Sources**

- University-wide Language Learning modules open to all students (contributing income beyond degree FTE)
- PGT: MA in Applied Translation Studies; MA with Ukraine (joint programme)
- PGR recruitment: more PGR per staff FTE than current provision
- REF QR income: approximately £647,000 per year based on REF2021 results
- Space savings: reduction from £491,000 to £223,500 (£267,500 saving per year, calculated at £7,450 per staff FTE)

#### **The Language Centre**

This counterproposal for the Language Centre is submitted independently from, but in conjunction with, the MLC counterproposal set out in Part 1 of this document. The LC's financial projections incorporate student FTE from MLC degree programmes (100 FTE Honours students) and the continued delivery of

Language Learning modules for degree students. The timeline for the inclusion of Honours students within integrated LC cohorts is contingent on the outcome of the MLC counterproposal. The two proposals should be read together. The LC counterproposal draws on and develops the alternative proposal submitted by Language Centre staff.

### *Overview*

The Language Centre currently provides courses to approximately 140 student FTE (around 1,700 enrolments in 2025/26), delivering university-wide language provision across nine languages (Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish). FN2 proposes significant reduction or closure of LC provision.

UCU proposes that the Language Centre be retained as the University's primary provider of modern language teaching for all students, with academic status, a reformed curriculum, and an integrated cohort model that substantially increases student FTE and generates a clear financial surplus.

Building on existing demonstrable successes of the Language Centre – including a high number of accredited university-wide students (1,700 in 2025/26 across all disciplines), the Clinical Language Programme (96, 102, and 99 students in the last three years across 5 languages, with £258,000 external income in 2025/26 alone), civic engagement (635 learners from the general public in 2024/25, with a surplus of £38,939 after deducting all costs), tri-campus collaboration, work-placement employability schemes, and nationally and internationally recognised scholarship, this proposal introduces three areas of transformative innovation that will ensure the LC meets the University Strategic Case for Change priorities, in particular sustainability through increased SSR, increased income, and reduction of modules. The proposed innovations are:

- Curriculum: review and update of the language curriculum to (a) reduce the number of modules; (b) respond to student needs and increase demand (timeframe: 2027–2028).
- Integrated cohorts: bring together students with different enrolment statuses – accredited, non-accredited, Honours specialist, and members of the public – within the same classroom and the same language learning experience (timeframe: 2027–2028; the timeline for the inclusion of Honours students depends on the success and timeline of the MLC alternative proposal).
- Diversified modes of delivery: introduce alternative modes of delivery, e.g. intensive and online courses to extend reach to new student cohorts and grow participation (timeframe: 2027–2028).

The LC will offer a flexible and inclusive language provision that enables all students from across the University to access language learning opportunities within or outside their credit structure and timetable.

### *Alternative Proposals*

#### **1. Integrated Cohorts**

The LC will integrate all categories of language learner into shared teaching cohorts, bringing together students with different enrolment statuses within the same classroom and language learning experience. In addition to the students on MLC degree courses who will be taking LL modules in the LC and current accredited university-wide students (see part 1), the integrated cohort model will increase student FTE as follows:

- Non-accredited members of the public: 700 learners (estimated from enrolment figures in 2024/25) = **14 FTE** (calculation based on estimated income at £200 per learner per language module)
- Students taking the Clinical Language Programme: **27 FTE** (calculation based on income £258,000 in 2025/26)
- Non-accredited elective fee-paying students: **2 FTE** (calculation based on £12,500 income in 2025/26)

Total: **43 additional student FTE**.

This model is demonstrably viable, with the LC already serving 1,700 accredited students across the University (140 FTE), and a projected 160 new MLC degree students per year (equivalent to 100 FTE for LL modules across a four-year cycle).

Student Category	Student FTE	Income Basis
Accredited university-wide students (current base)	140	Tuition fee allocation (UK Home)
Non-accredited members of the public	14	£200/learner/module
Accredited Honours students (from MLC counterproposal)	100	Tuition fee allocation
Clinical Language Programme	27	£258,000 income in 2025/26
Non-accredited elective fee-paying students	2	£12,500 income in 2025/26
Total	283	£2,698,405

The 140 FTE of accredited university-wide students forms the shared baseline between the MLC and LC proposals. The remaining 43 FTE in the LC projection (non-accredited members of the public: 14 FTE; Clinical Language Programme: 27 FTE; non-accredited elective fee-paying students: 2 FTE) are additional student populations not included in the MLC section, as they are specific to the LC.

For these non-standard groups, FTE is calculated on an income basis: total income for each group divided by £9,535 (the annual tuition fee for full-time home students, taken as the equivalent of 1 FTE). These figures exclude income from Engaged Arts modules (student numbers difficult to predict at present) and from intensive/online provision. Any recruitment through these routes will improve income and SSR beyond those forecast.

## 2. Reduced Curriculum

The LC will offer a new structured range of proficiency levels across all nine languages, ensuring a credible and competitive progression pathway. Languages with historically lower demand will offer a minimum of two levels (Beginner and Intermediate); those with sustained high demand will offer four to five levels. This restructuring reduces the number of language modules from 74 to 44, including all language teaching required for Honours students, eliminating duplication.

## 3. Diversified Modes of Delivery

The LC will introduce intensive and online courses to extend reach to new student cohorts and grow participation, initially on a fee-paying basis to allow scalability in response to demand. These are excluded from the headline financial projections, meaning any recruitment through these routes improves the SSR and income beyond those forecast.

## 4. Apply a Subject-Appropriate SSR Target of 16:1

UCU proposes a target SSR of 1:16 for the Language Centre. With projected student FTE of 283, an SSR of 16:1 is achievable at 17.69 FTE, which corresponds to no compulsory reduction from the current 17 FTE.

### *Estimated Savings*

Scenario	Staff FTE	Student FTE	SSR	Expenditure (staff salary)	Income (student fees)	Surplus
Current (2025/26)	17	140	8.2:1	£1,340,433	£1,334,900	-£5,533
UCU counterproposal	17.69	283	16:1	£1,394,839	£2,698,405	+£1,303,566

Note: income is based on 2025-26 UK home fees (£9,535). From 2026, the fees will increase to £9,790 (maximum confirmed by the UK Government). The projected income will therefore be higher.

Expenditure calculated at average full cost of £78,849 per FTE. The UCU proposal of increasing student intake for 17.69 FTE generates a substantial surplus of £1,303,566, compared to the current near-breakeven position. This makes a compelling case that the LC is a net contributor to University income at the proposed staffing level, not a liability.

The proposed model transforms the LC from a near-breakeven service into a surplus-generating academic unit:

Year	Income	Expenditure (staff salary)	Surplus
2025/26 (baseline)	£1,334,900	£1,340,433 (17 FTE)	-£5,533
2026/27 (transition)	£1,600,000 (est.)	£1,340,433	+£259,567
2027/28 (Honours cohort integrating)	£2,200,000 (est.)	£1,394,839 (17.69 FTE)	+£805,161

2028/29 onward (steady state)	£2,698,405	£1,394,839	+£1,303,566
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Transition year income estimates are conservative and assume a gradual build-up of Honours student cohorts aligned with the MLC teach-out timeline. These figures also exclude Engaged Arts, intensive/online, and any VR/MARS-related savings.

The employability and economic case for language study remains strong. See: [RAND Europe / British Academy 2022: The Economic Value to the UK of Speaking Other Languages](#) and [UNESCO: Multilingualism and sustainable development](#).

### Relationship of MLC-LC proposals

The MLC and LC counterproposals in this document are submitted separately but are mutually reinforcing. Each can be read as a standalone proposal; however, the strongest academic and financial case is made when they are adopted together. The table below summarises the key interdependencies.

Element	MLC Counterproposal	LC Counterproposal
<b>Language Learning delivery</b>	LL modules embedded in both new degrees, delivered by the LC. MLC degree students take LL modules alongside university-wide students.	Primary provider of all LL modules for degree students and university-wide students. Integrated cohort model absorbs MLC degree demand within existing LC provision.
<b>Student FTE dependency</b>	Generates 100 FTE of Honours students taking LL modules in the LC (from 160 new degree students per year across a 4-year cycle).	Incorporates 100 MLC Honours FTE within 283 total student FTE. These 100 FTE are the largest single new income stream under the LC proposal.
<b>Module rationalisation</b>	Reduces MLC provision from 246 modules to 15 CS modules (+ LL modules delivered by LC). Over 80% reduction in module count.	Reduces LC provision from 74 to 44 modules, absorbing LL demand from MLC degree students and eliminating duplication of modules between MLC and the LC.
<b>SSR target</b>	1:16 (30 FTE staff, 480 student FTE across degree cycle)	1:16 (17.69 FTE staff, 283 student FTE)
<b>Financial outcome</b>	£2,828,314 salary saving vs current combined staffing; £3,041,665 student fee income; REF QR ~£647,000/yr; space savings £267,500. Total annual benefit ~£8,320,000.	+£1,303,566 surplus per year in steady state (vs -£5,533 currently). Income rises progressively from 2026/27 as integrated cohorts build up.
<b>Compulsory redundancies</b>	Rejected. Natural attrition is sufficient without CRs.	Rejected. No reduction in FTE required: the proposed 17.69 FTE is above the current 17

		FTE, reflecting the expansion of the student base.
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**If only one proposal is adopted**

If the MLC proposal is adopted but the LC proposal is not: the new MLC degrees can proceed, but Language Learning modules would need to be delivered by MLC staff directly rather than by the LC. The 100 FTE of Honours students would not flow into LC income projections. The LC would revert to serving only university-wide and non-accredited students (~183 student FTE at 17 FTE staff, SSR 10.8:1), still generating a surplus compared to its current near-breakeven position, but substantially below the steady-state projection of +£1,303,566.

If the LC proposal is adopted but the MLC proposal is not: the LC can operate as the University’s primary language provider for university-wide and non-accredited students without MLC Honours students. Income projections would reduce by approximately £952,100 (the 100 Honours FTE at £9,535 per FTE), reducing the projected surplus to approximately £351,000 per year. The LC remains financially viable and continues to generate a surplus, but the full transformative potential of the integrated cohort model is not realised.

The strongest academic and financial case is for both proposals to be adopted together. In combination they deliver: a net salary saving of £2,828,314 against current combined staffing; student fee income of £3,041,665 (MLC) and £2,698,405 (LC); a Language Centre annual surplus of £1,303,566 from steady state. The combined provision is self-sustaining and supports UoN’s strategic objectives on SSR, income generation, portfolio simplification, and regional and national language capacity.

## **Department of Music**

*UCU supports the counterproposal delivered by the Department of Music, provided that the proposed staff reduction of 4.5 FTE is achieved entirely through voluntary retirement, voluntary severance and/or natural attrition.*

### **Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

# Faculty of Engineering

## Introduction

### Counterproposal Scope

This counterproposal does not seek to establish a particular student-staff ratio (SSR). Nor does it assume that the University's future staffing profile can be determined without consideration of workforce turnover, retirement, voluntary severance, vacancy management and other non-compulsory workforce-planning factors. The figures discussed in this document, including projected attrition, retirement and vacancy management, are included to test the evidential and financial basis of the Faculty's proposal, not as acceptance that any level of staff reduction is necessary or agreed. Nothing in this document should be read as accepting that compulsory redundancies could become acceptable if the University addressed the evidential gaps identified here. The UoN UCU's position is clear. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario where they form part of the Faculty's future staffing strategy regardless of what evidence the University provides.

### Central Concern

This document's central concern is that the draft business case, Engineering consultation documentation and associated appendices contain no evidence that the proposed staffing trajectory has been evaluated for compatibility with the accreditation and regulatory obligations, and the academic and strategic commitments on which the Faculty's and the University's own stated academic and strategic objectives depend. The issue addressed here is therefore not simply the numerical value of the proposed SSR, but whether the Faculty has demonstrated that the staffing model underpinning it remains compatible with those objectives.

### Evidential Failures

This counterproposal advances three connected failures in the evidential basis underpinning the proposed staffing trajectory.

1. The Faculty plans to adopt a target SSR without demonstrating that it has comprehensively assessed its accreditation and regulatory obligations and its academic and strategic commitments before incorporating that target into the business case. These include:
  - the 20:1 FTE benchmark formally evaluated by BEM, a Washington Accord-recognised engineering accreditor within the University's own international ecosystem,
  - the LAM accreditation requirements applicable to Architecture provision within the Faculty,
  - its Office for Students (OfS) regulatory conditions,
  - its published commitments to students on teaching standards and equivalence across campuses, and
  - the compatibility of the proposed trajectory with the international partnerships, degree apprenticeships and employer-funded growth mechanisms on which FN2's stated financial sustainability depends.
2. The Faculty has identified surplus capacity against that target without first establishing the teaching capacity it actually holds. Its SSR denominator uses establishment FTE that does not account for externally funded research buyouts or the research time inherent in R&T employment - a problem the University's own Appendix E implicitly acknowledges.
  - The Faculty has proposed staffing reductions without demonstrating that they are necessary. Its own consultation documentation assumes that 22.0 FTE of workforce reduction in years two to four will be achieved through staff attrition / turnover, yet provides no comparable analysis

demonstrating why reductions of 37.54 FTE were adopted for AY26/27 before those mechanisms have had an opportunity to operate. Nor does the consultation documentation demonstrate why permanent capacity should be removed at that pace when the Faculty's own recent undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment indicators and planning assumptions do not present a simple picture of declining student demand from which substantial surplus teaching capacity can safely be inferred.

The alternative this counterproposal proposes is accordingly one of sequencing and evidential discipline, not one of conditional acceptance: exhausting non-compulsory workforce-planning measures, correcting the teaching-capacity analysis, and reassessing against confirmed recruitment and delivery evidence before the Faculty asserts that the proposed staffing trajectory has been demonstrated or proceeds to implement it.

### **Document Structure**

Section 1 examines all three failures in turn: whether the proposed staffing trajectory was adequately assessed against the University's obligations, commitments and strategic objectives before it was adopted (Failure 1); whether the teaching capacity represented by the SSR denominator was reliably established (Failure 2); and whether the workforce-planning assumptions, timing and evidential basis of the proposed staffing trajectory were sufficient to demonstrate that reductions at the proposed scale and pace were necessary (Failure 3). Section 2 then considers the financial, recruitment, partnership and strategic risks that arise if those evidential failures remain unresolved, with particular emphasis on the governance failures identified in Failure 1.

Each failure is capable of standing on its own. Taken together, however, they demonstrate that the evidential basis for the proposed staffing trajectory in the Faculty of Engineering has not been established. That is a governance failure, and it is the foundation on which this counterproposal rests.

### **Outcome Requested**

This counterproposal does not propose an alternative SSR. It proposes an alternative decision process. Before decisions are implemented to achieve the proposed Faculty staffing trajectory, the University should disclose the full evidential basis on which it concluded that the proposed staffing trajectory is compatible with its accreditation obligations, regulatory requirements, academic commitments and strategic objectives. Where no such assessment has been undertaken, it should be completed and published before redundancy decisions are considered. Until that evidential basis is disclosed, the business case remains incomplete.

### **Factual Context**

The issues raised in this counterproposal arise from a number of interconnected features of the University's Engineering provision and the assumptions underpinning the proposed staffing trajectory. These include international accreditation arrangements, inter-campus mobility and academic equivalence arrangements, Faculty-wide accreditation obligations, regulatory requirements, strategic growth commitments, workforce-planning assumptions, and the Faculty's current student recruitment position and longer-term demand planning assumptions. The following factual context summarises those arrangements, assumptions and indicators. Together, they provide the context within which the three failures identified in this counterproposal are examined.

1. The University delivers Engineering at its UK campus and at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC). UNMC Engineering programmes are accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Council under the authority of the Board of Engineers Malaysia (BEM), Malaysia's statutory engineering regulator and a Washington Accord signatory. The Engineering Council UK is also a Washington Accord signatory; both bodies have been formally recognised as delivering substantially equivalent engineering education standards.

BEM has formally evaluated staffing requirements for accredited Engineering programmes and established a 20:1 (student : staff FTE) benchmark [[Engineering Programme Accreditation Standard 2024](#)], explicitly linking staffing levels to teaching quality, student support and advising, research activity, professional development and industry engagement. On figures published in the Faculty's consultation document, the University's proposed trajectory reaches this benchmark in AY26/27 and exceeds it from AY28/29. The implications of recalculating the trajectory using effective teaching FTE are examined in Section 1f.

The significance of the BEM benchmark arises not simply from the existence of accredited Engineering provision in Malaysia, but from the University's own inter-campus educational model. The University operates Engineering provision across Nottingham and UNMC through arrangements that permit students to transfer between campuses and continue their studies within a common academic framework. It actively promotes inter-campus mobility, programme transfer and tri-campus study pathways as defining features of its international Engineering provision. The University of Nottingham Malaysia inter-campus transfer programme explicitly enables students to study specific Engineering degrees, including MEng Chemical Engineering, MEng Civil Engineering, MEng Mechanical Engineering and MEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering, across both Nottingham UK and UNMC campuses. The University promotes this as a distinctive feature of its global provision, describing students as being able to "*Study the same modules with the same academic standards.*" [[UoN Inter Campus Exchange Programme](#)]. Students transferring under these arrangements study alongside UK-registered students on the same modules and within the same degree framework. The University has therefore established formal mechanisms through which curriculum continuity, academic equivalence and student mobility are recognised and operationalised across campuses - and it is the interaction between those mechanisms and the BEM-evaluated accreditation standard that gives the benchmark its relevance here.

2. In addition to Engineering-specific accreditation obligations, Architecture programmes form part of the Faculty of Engineering and are directly accredited by Lembaga Arkitek Malaysia (LAM), the Board of Architects Malaysia. LAM's published accreditation standards specify maximum design-studio student-staff ratios of between 1:10 and 1:15 for Part I provision and not exceeding 1:10 for Part II provision [[Special Note MAPS #4-2020](#)], figures substantially below the staffing trajectory proposed within FN2
3. Alongside its accreditation obligations, the University remains subject to OfS Conditions B1 and B2, concerning the quality of academic provision and the resources and support available to students, and OfS Condition C1, concerning consumer-protection obligations to students. None of these conditions prescribes a particular student-staff ratio, but each requires the University to satisfy itself that the quality, resourcing and representations associated with its provision remain sufficient and reliable.

4. FN2 identifies revenue diversification and growth as an important component of future financial sustainability, including through degree apprenticeships, CPD, professional and work-based learning, strategic partnerships and wider commercial education activity. The wider FN2 documentation also links future growth to international partnerships, transnational education and tri-campus integration across the UK, China and Malaysia campuses. Appendix I describes the University as the country's largest provider of both Data Science and Electro-Mechanical Engineering apprenticeships. Several of these growth mechanisms depend upon the staffing intensity the Faculty is able to sustain.
5. The consultation documentation further presents a staffing trajectory in which a further 22.0 FTE reduction is projected over years two to four through workforce attrition and turnover and uses establishment FTE as the basis for SSR calculations. The implications of those assumptions for workforce planning, teaching capacity and the necessity of the proposed staffing reductions are considered later in this counterproposal.
6. The Faculty's own recent undergraduate and postgraduate taught recruitment indicators, together with its longer-term planning assumptions regarding future applicant demand, do not present a straightforward picture of declining demand for Engineering programmes. The significance of those indicators for the necessity, timing and pace of the proposed staffing reduction is considered later in this counterproposal.

In summary, the draft business case and consultation documentation do not demonstrate how UNMC and inter-campus provision were reflected in the Engineering workforce modelling; whether cross-campus workload responsibilities, accreditation requirements or equivalence commitments were incorporated into the proposed staffing trajectory; whether the compatibility of the proposed changes with the University's stated growth mechanisms and strategic objectives was assessed; whether the workforce-planning and teaching-capacity assumptions underpinning the proposed staffing trajectory were documented and disclosed; or whether the Faculty's current recruitment position, set out at point 6 above, was considered in determining the necessity, timing and sequencing of the proposed reductions. The significance of that recruitment evidence is examined further in Failure 3.

The implications of those omissions are considered in the sections that follow. Section 1 examines all three failures in turn and considers whether the proposed staffing trajectory was adequately assessed against the University's obligations, commitments and governance responsibilities. Section 2 then considers the financial, recruitment, partnership and strategic risks that arise from Failure 1 specifically.

## **Section 1. Evidential Basis for the Proposed Staffing Trajectory**

The subsections that follow examine the three failures identified previously. Failure 1 concerns the assessment of the proposed staffing trajectory against the University's obligations, commitments and strategic objectives. Failure 2 concerns the teaching-capacity assumptions underpinning the SSR methodology. Failure 3 concerns the workforce-planning assumptions underpinning the proposed staffing trajectory and the evidential basis on which it was adopted.

### **Failure 1: Assessment of the Proposed Staffing Trajectory**

#### ***1a Governance assessment***

The University proposes to exceed a staffing benchmark formally evaluated by BEM, a Washington Accord-recognised engineering accreditation body. The issue is not whether that body's criteria apply

directly to UK provision. They do not. Nor does this counterproposal assert that SSR alone determines educational quality, or that equivalent provision requires identical staffing ratios across campuses. The issue is whether the University assessed the implications of exceeding that benchmark before incorporating the proposed staffing trajectory into the business case. It is also whether the University can demonstrate the evidential basis for its conclusion that doing so remains compatible with equivalent educational quality across campuses.

The University already operates a formal mechanism for evaluating educational equivalence across campuses. Students on Malaysia pathways transfer onto the equivalent UK programme through an approved academic equivalence process and graduate with an award indistinguishable from that of a student who studied entirely in Nottingham. That mechanism demonstrates that the University treats equivalence between its campuses as something that must be formally assessed and documented, not assumed. A staffing trajectory that creates a materially different teaching environment on one side of that same equivalence boundary raises a comparable question, even though the existing equivalence process was not designed to address it: whether the University has any disclosed any basis for concluding that the equivalence it has certified through that process remains intact once staffing conditions diverge this significantly. The draft business case and Engineering consultation documentation contain no evidence that any such assessment was undertaken in relation to the proposed staffing trajectory including no identification of the assessment undertaken, the governance process followed, or the evidential basis relied upon.

The University's tri-campus model extends beyond permanent transfer. Its Inter-Campus Exchange Programme allows UNMC-registered Engineering students to spend a semester or year studying at the UK campus. They are taught in the same modules, alongside UK-registered students before returning to UNMC to complete their degree. The University presents this as occurring within "*our unique tri-campus network*" with "*seamless credit transfers back to UNMC*" [[UoN Inter-Campus Exchange Programme to UK or China](#)], rather than as a discrete arrangement with a separate institution. The issue this raises is not whether BEM's 20:1 benchmark formally extends to exchange teaching delivered at the UK campus - that is a jurisdictional question this counterproposal does not resolve. The issue is whether the University, having represented its tri-campus provision as one integrated and continuous academic ecosystem, has assessed the implications of operating that ecosystem at materially different staffing intensities across its constituent parts. The consultation documentation contains no evidence that this was considered.

### ***1b Published commitments***

The University's student-facing materials state that, since 2000, it has "*operated as a UK University in Malaysia, upholding the same standards of teaching, academic excellence, and research innovation as our UK campus*" [[University of Nottingham Malaysia: 25 Years of World-Class UK Education in Malaysia](#)], and that students transferring to the UK campus can "*enjoy Nottingham's curriculum and academic support while exploring a different campus environment*" [[UoN Inter-Campus Transfer Programme](#)]. An Engineering study abroad page carries student testimony that spending a year of the student's course in Malaysia was "*one of the best decisions I ever made,*" and that "*the option to go out there was one of the reasons that I chose Nottingham to study in the first place*" [[Faculty of Engineering - Study Abroad](#)], confirming that the intercampus pathway is a factor students rely on when choosing Nottingham.

These are deliberate pre-contractual commitments relied upon by students at the point of enrolment. The University's own representations therefore extend beyond the existence of international campuses and encompass expectations of equivalent academic standards, comparable educational quality and

continuity of the student experience across those campuses. These commitments do not themselves specify what staffing intensity equivalent academic standards require, but a recognised accreditor within the University's own international ecosystem has already done so.

The BEM benchmark of 20:1 FTE represents the staffing standard applied to Engineering programmes accredited through the University's Malaysian campus. This counterproposal does not assert that the benchmark applies directly to UK provision. It does, however, provide evidence that a recognised engineering accreditor within the University's own international ecosystem has formally evaluated the relationship between staffing levels and educational quality and concluded that a ratio of 20:1 FTE is appropriate for accredited engineering provision. BEM's benchmark was not set with reference to Nottingham's equivalence arrangements between UNMC and the UK campus, and this counterproposal does not suggest otherwise. Its relevance here is narrower: it is independent evidence that a materially different staffing assumption from the one now proposed has, elsewhere in the same university system, been treated as the threshold for educational quality. The equivalence arrangements described in 1a are what make that divergence relevant to programmes connected to the UK trajectory, rather than a fact confined to Malaysia alone — they are the mechanism through which the University already determines whether materially different academic arrangements remain compatible with equivalent educational provision. The issue is whether the University assessed those implications before adopting the proposed staffing trajectory. The consultation documentation does not demonstrate that such an assessment was undertaken or disclosed.

The need for such assessment is reinforced by the University's previous experience in other accreditation contexts. In the case of its UNNC Architecture provision, accreditation concerns arose regarding the relationship between programmes delivered across different campuses and the implications of apparently equivalent awards and programme titles. Those concerns ultimately required institutional action to maintain a clear distinction between routes. Whether or not that situation is directly analogous to the present case is not the issue. The significance of the precedent is that it demonstrates that the accreditation implications of equivalence arrangements are not always self-evident and may only become apparent when subjected to formal scrutiny. The governance lesson is therefore not that the same outcome will arise here, but that compatibility with accreditation requirements cannot simply be assumed. It must be assessed.

### *1c Governance process*

A staffing change of this scale affects provision connected through formal equivalence arrangements, inter-campus mobility pathways and shared degree awards. The University has since disclosed to the Union, a generic, high-level description of how staffing reduction proposals were developed across the institution, including reference to review and adjustment at Faculty and School level prior to consultation. That disclosure addresses the institutional process in general terms; it does not identify whether the implications of the proposed staffing trajectory for equivalence arrangements, inter-campus provision, shared awards and related governance matters were assessed in relation to Engineering specifically.

The University's own FN2 guidance requires counterproposals to be compatible with regulatory, employment, legal and governance constraints. The draft business case should be capable of demonstrating the same evidential standard.

This counterproposal does not proceed on the basis that no assessment was ever undertaken or documented. It proceeds on the basis that the Engineering-specific evidential basis for the conclusions

reached has not been disclosed as part of the consultation documentation or the business case. The burden of proactive disclosure rests with the University, not with individual consultees: this counterproposal has been prepared on behalf of an entire Faculty, within the timeframe available during consultation, and a consultee cannot be expected to identify and specifically request every document that might bear on every accreditation, regulatory, equivalence and workforce-planning question raised by a restructuring of this scale. Assessments that are neither disclosed nor evidenced within the consultation cannot be scrutinised by consultees and therefore cannot form part of the evidential basis available to them when responding to decisions of this scale. On the material disclosed, the University has not demonstrated that the proposed staffing trajectory was subjected to the level of academic, accreditation and governance scrutiny that it expects counterproposals to satisfy.

### *1d OfS obligations*

As an OfS-registered provider, the University remains subject to Conditions B1 and B2 concerning academic experience, resources and student support. Both conditions are built around the same regulatory standard: Condition B1 requires the provider to ensure that students registered on each higher education course receive a high-quality academic experience, and Condition B2 requires the provider to take all reasonable steps to ensure that each cohort of students receives resources and support sufficient to achieve that same standard and to succeed in and beyond higher education. OfS guidance on Condition B2 makes clear that "resources" include staffing appropriate to the size and needs of the student cohort, and that providers should assess the impact of any change in staffing arrangements on students. Neither condition, however, prescribes a particular student-staff ratio; the test is one of sufficiency, assessed against the cohort and any change affecting it, not a fixed numerical benchmark. [[Securing student success: Regulatory framework for higher education in England, Condition B2: Resources, support and student engagement](#)]).

The consultation documentation discloses no assessment demonstrating how the implications of the proposed staffing trajectory for academic quality, student support, educational resources and the quality of the academic experience within the Faculty were considered before the trajectory was incorporated into the business case. The University has since disclosed, at an institutional level, that considerations including the delivery and quality of teaching and assessment were among the factors said to inform proposal development generally. That disclosure does not, however, identify the Engineering-specific assessment of how the proposed staffing trajectory was evaluated against academic quality, student support, educational resources and the quality of the academic experience within the Faculty. The issue is not whether the University ultimately concluded that the proposed trajectory remained compatible with its regulatory obligations. It is whether the Engineering-specific basis for that conclusion was disclosed and capable of scrutiny.

The University's published commitments regarding teaching standards, quality assurance, equivalence across campuses and continuity of the student experience also sit within a wider regulatory and consumer-protection framework. Ongoing OfS Condition C1 requires a registered provider to demonstrate that, in developing and implementing its policies, procedures and terms and conditions, it has given due regard to relevant guidance about compliance with consumer protection law, including CMA guidance. OfS guidance explains that this includes ensuring that applicants and students are provided with accurate, timely and accessible information about their course and provider, and that student-facing terms and conditions are transparent and fair [[Condition C1: Guidance on consumer protection law](#)].

The relevance of those commitments is not merely reputational. The consultation documentation discloses no equivalent assessment of the proposed staffing trajectory against these published commitments and student-facing representations.

**1e Architecture accreditation**

The assessment issues identified in this counterproposal extend across the Faculty of Engineering in its entirety, including its Architecture provision. The Faculty of Engineering includes the Department of Architecture and Built Environment, whose programmes are directly accredited by the Lembaga Arkitek Malaysia (LAM). The proposed FN2 staffing reductions apply to Architecture staff within the Faculty on the same basis as all other Engineering departments. Unlike the BEM benchmark, LAM directly accredits the Faculty’s Architecture provision. The jurisdictional distinction relied upon in relation to BEM does not apply in the same way to LAM’s accreditation of this provision.

MAPS Special Note #4-2020 records that MAAP (2013:24) specifies design-studio lecturer-student ratios of between 1:10 and 1:15 for LAM Part I and not exceeding 1:10 for LAM Part II [[Special Note MAPS #4-2020](#)]. On the material presently available, these are staffing benchmarks published within the LAM/MAPS accreditation framework and are plainly relevant to the staffing assumptions affecting Architecture provision. The underlying MAAP (2013) Manual of Accreditation for Architecture Programmes and PAID (2019) Policy and Procedures for Accreditation of Interior Design Programmes, from which these figures are drawn, were not available through public sources at the time of preparing this counterproposal; the figures above are accordingly sourced from LAM's own subsequent circular rather than the original manuals.

The importance of staffing levels within Architecture education is reflected not only in LAM’s accreditation requirements but also in wider sector practice. The RIBA Education Statistics 2023/24 report records approximately 2,200 teaching staff FTE across RIBA-validated schools and an aggregate student-to-teaching-staff ratio of 8.5:1 in 2023/2024 across RIBA-validated schools (Table 1) [[RIBA Education Statistics 2023/24](#)]. RIBA does not prescribe a specific SSR benchmark and no claim is made that the sector average represents a mandatory staffing standard. The comparison is nonetheless informative: a sector average of 8.5:1, set against a proposed trajectory of 22:1, places the Faculty's Architecture provision at close to three times the staffing intensity the sector average implies, with evident consequences for how the provision is likely to be perceived by prospective students, professional bodies and accrediting visitors making exactly the comparison the data invites.

	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Student to teaching staff ratio (FTE)	12.3:1	11.2:1	13.2:1	10.8:1	8.5:1

*Table 1: RIBA Education Statistics 2023/2024. Extracted from Table 6.2: Staff numbers, full time equivalent, last five years, validated courses only. Note: Unlike LAM, these are department as opposed to studio-specific SSRs.*

The significance of these benchmarks extends beyond those staff formally designated as studio tutors. While the LAM ratio is expressed through design studio provision, studio does not operate as a discrete element of the curriculum. Design studio is required to comprise at least 50% of the programme under the accreditation requirements of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Architects Registration Board (ARB), but it is inseparable from the lecture, seminar, technical, environmental,

structural, historical, theoretical and professional-practice teaching that directly informs and supports studio learning. Students do not experience these components as separate educational activities; together they constitute the accredited programme. The staffing implications of maintaining compliance with accreditation requirements therefore cannot be assessed solely by reference to those staff formally designated as studio tutors. They extend across the departmental staffing model as a whole.

The Engineering consultation documentation contains no evidence that the LAM accreditation requirements, the wider staffing implications of Architecture accreditation, or the relationship between the proposed staffing trajectory and recognised sector staffing norms were formally assessed and that basis disclosed before the proposed reductions were incorporated into the business case. The issue is not whether the University ultimately concluded that the proposed staffing trajectory remained compatible with those requirements. It is whether the basis for that conclusion was identified, evidenced and disclosed. The University's later disclosure of its general approach to proposal development refers to PSRB and other accreditation requirements as a factor said to have been considered in refining proposals. That disclosure does not identify how LAM's requirements specifically were applied to Architecture provision within the Faculty.

*The significance of this is not that the University should necessarily have anticipated this precise accreditation question in advance. It is that the Faculty's accreditation landscape spanning Engineering and Architecture provision, transnational delivery and cross-campus equivalence arrangements, is broader and less self-evident than a process built primarily around a single Engineering-focused SSR might assume. That is precisely why a documented assessment process matters: it should be capable of identifying and evaluating accreditation-sensitive considerations of this kind before implementation, including ones that are not immediately obvious at the outset.*

## Failure 2: Teaching Capacity and SSR Denominator

### *1f The SSR denominator: a governance question in its own right*

The governance question this section raises is whether the University correctly measured the staffing resource against which 22:1 was assessed.

For the purposes of this counterproposal, "effective teaching FTE" refers to staffing capacity available for teaching, student support and associated educational activity after accounting for externally committed research time. The term is used solely as a descriptive measure of teaching capacity derived from the University's own consultation data and should not be interpreted as representing the total range of workload factors that may affect teaching availability.

BEM/EAC's Engineering Programme Accreditation Standard states that "*the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) academic staff to student ratio should not exceed 1:20 to ensure effective teaching and learning, student-staff interaction, student advising and counselling, IHL service and research activities, professional development and interaction with the industry*" [[Engineering Programme Accreditation Standard 2024](#)], confirming that the benchmark is calculated on a full-time equivalent basis, not headcount. The University's SSR methodology uses establishment FTE drawn from UniCore. The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the University assessed whether establishment FTE is an appropriate representation of the staffing capacity that the BEM benchmark is intended to protect. The University's own consultation data provided to the Union identifies 25.45 FTE of partial research buyouts within Engineering, representing academic time that is contractually committed to externally funded activity and therefore not fully available for teaching, yet remains embedded in the

establishment FTE denominator. The SSR methodology document does not explain how partial buyouts are treated within that denominator.

The significance of this question extends beyond the BEM benchmark. The same SSR denominator underpins the University's assessment of staffing capacity available to support accredited provision, student support, assessment and feedback activity, employer-funded learning, degree apprenticeships, strategic partnerships, commercial education and wider growth activities identified elsewhere in FN2. If establishment FTE does not reliably represent teaching capacity, the implications extend to every subsequent claim within the business case regarding surplus capacity, workforce planning and the sustainability of the proposed staffing trajectory.

The practical significance of this question can be demonstrated using the University's own consultation data. Table 2 below recalculates the published Engineering SSR trajectory after removing the 25.45 FTE of partial research buyouts identified in the consultation documentation from the staff denominator, expressed against the BEM 20:1 benchmark used throughout this section as a fixed point of comparison; the significance of that comparison is addressed immediately below the table. The student FTE of 4,955 is drawn directly from the Engineering consultation document. No additional assumptions have been applied. The purpose of this calculation is not to establish Engineering's true teaching capacity; it is to illustrate the scale of the issue using the University's own data, on the basis that externally committed time may not represent teaching capacity available to support the educational activities that the SSR is intended to measure.

Academic Year	Published SSR	Staff FTE minus research buyouts	Effective SSR	Position relative to BEM ≤20:1 benchmark
Current (25/26)	17:1	265.39	<b>18.7:1</b>	Within benchmark
2026/27	20:1	220.69	<b>22.5:1</b>	Exceeds benchmark
2027/28	20:1	215.69	<b>23.0:1</b>	Exceeds benchmark
2028/29	21:1	207.19	<b>23.9:1</b>	Exceeds benchmark
2029/30	22:1	198.69	<b>24.9:1</b>	Exceeds benchmark

*Table 2: Recalculation of the Engineering SSR trajectory after removal of 25.45FTE of buyout. Note: The consequences of this calculation and the scale of the proposed reductions will be considered in Failure 3 and Section 2 that follows.*

When the Faculty's own research buyout data is applied to the denominator, the effective SSR exceeds the BEM benchmark from the first year of implementation, despite the published figures showing the Faculty operating within that benchmark in AY2026/27 and AY2027/28. The significance of this calculation is not that BEM necessarily governs UK provision, but that relatively small changes in the denominator produce materially different conclusions regarding staffing capacity. The critical question is therefore not how many academic staff the Faculty employs, but how much academic time is genuinely available for teaching, student support and associated educational activity. Establishment FTE and teaching capacity are not necessarily the same thing.

If establishment FTE overstates the teaching capacity actually available to the Faculty, the consequences extend well beyond the BEM comparison itself. They affect every downstream conclusion drawn from the SSR model, including the amount of surplus capacity said to exist, the scale of staffing reduction said

to be required, the Faculty's capacity to sustain assessment, feedback, student support and project supervision at the proposed staffing levels, the Faculty's ability to deliver the apprenticeship, partnership and strategic growth activity addressed in Section 2.2, and the claim that the proposed staffing trajectory is educationally and operationally sustainable. A denominator error of this kind is therefore not a narrow methodological point; it is a foundational uncertainty that the consultation documentation does not resolve. That uncertainty is compounded by the recruitment and planning evidence discussed in Failure 3, which indicates that the Faculty's current and projected student demand does not, on its own terms, support the confidence with which any surplus capacity is being assumed.

This compounds the governance failure identified in 1a: the Faculty cannot demonstrate that 22:1 was educationally justified, and it cannot demonstrate that the surplus identified against that figure was calculated on a reliable measure of teaching capacity.

The absence of an agreed workload model provides further evidence on this point. The Engineering Faculty has not operated an agreed workload model since the Covid-19 period. The consultation documentation does not identify any workload model, workload-allocation framework or equivalent methodology used to determine teaching capacity within the Faculty's workforce. The SSR methodology instead relies upon establishment FTE as the staff denominator, with no disclosed methodology explaining how teaching, research, student-support, administrative, professional and engagement activities undertaken by academic staff were translated into the teaching-capacity assumptions underpinning that denominator. The issue is not whether such a methodology exists. It is that no such methodology has been disclosed.

The FN2 proposals provide further evidence on this point. Appendix E (RKE Dynamic Workload Model Proposal) proposes "*a baseline allocation for research and knowledge exchange, proposed at 25% for all staff on an eligible contract.*" It explains that the purpose of the model is to create a more consistent and transparent approach to workload allocation, to link additional research time to externally supported activity, and to avoid inequitable teaching allocation where externally funded research time is not properly reflected in workload planning. That proposal raises a material question about the relationship between the SSR denominator and actual teaching capacity. If establishment FTE already provided a reliable representation of the teaching capacity available to the Faculty, the need for a separate University-wide mechanism to reallocate research and teaching time in order to support delivery would require explanation. The point is not that the SSR methodology and the dynamic workload proposal are necessarily incompatible. It is that, read together, they leave unanswered how establishment FTE was treated as a reliable proxy for teaching capacity while FN2 separately recognises the need to reshape workload allocation in order to sustain delivery.

The University's later disclosure to the Union of its general approach to proposal development, states that the achievability of target SSRs was considered, with reference to factors including research buy-out and teaching and learning delivery demands. That disclosure reinforces rather than resolves the concern raised above: it confirms that research buy-out and delivery demands were treated as relevant to whether target ratios were realistically achievable, but it does not disclose the Engineering-specific analysis showing how research buy-out was incorporated into the Engineering SSR denominator, how achievability was tested against actual teaching capacity within the Faculty, or how those considerations affected the final Engineering staffing trajectory.

The consultation documentation also contains no assessment of how assessment and feedback obligations will be discharged at the proposed staffing levels. Assessment workload scales directly with student numbers and cannot be assumed to benefit from economies of scale in the manner implied by

SSR modelling. Individual marking, feedback, moderation, project supervision and student-support activities remain attached to individual students and submissions regardless of cohort size. The documentation contains no workload analysis demonstrating that the proposed staffing trajectory remains compatible with these obligations. The significance of this is sharpened, rather than merely illustrated, by the recruitment evidence addressed in Failure 3: if undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers continue on the trajectory that evidence indicates, a smaller establishment will be absorbing rising, not stable, assessment and feedback workload.

The consequences of this denominator uncertainty for the necessity, scale and wider sustainability of the proposed staffing trajectory are considered further in Failure 3 and Section 2 below

### **Failure 3: Necessity of the Proposed Staffing Reduction**

#### ***1g The necessity test***

The central question raised by this section is whether the University has demonstrated that reductions at the proposed scale are necessary before less disruptive mechanisms have been assessed and before the consequences of the proposed staffing trajectory on accreditation, regulatory, academic and strategic factors have been fully evaluated.

The University's own consultation documentation states that 22.0 FTE of workforce reduction in years two to four will be achieved through staff attrition/turnover (Section 2.2 of the Engineering Consultation Document). The documentation does not define the mechanism intended, does not disclose the assumptions on which the 22.0 FTE figure is based, and provides no sensitivity analysis. The Faculty's consultation document further identifies a workforce reduction requirement of 44.7 FTE associated with the proposed AY2026/27 staffing profile. Subsequently, 7.16 FTE of vacant posts were removed through vacancy management, reducing the remaining year-one reduction requirement to 37.54 FTE. The issue is not whether attrition, vacancy management or voluntary severance would necessarily have achieved that reduction. It is that the consultation documentation contains no evidence demonstrating how the contribution of those mechanisms was assessed before the proposed staffing trajectory was incorporated into the business case. This creates an internal inconsistency within the University's own workforce model: the same workforce-planning mechanisms relied upon to deliver reduction in years two to four are not shown to have been assessed in determining the scale of reduction required in year one.

The timing of the proposed reductions is therefore significant. The Faculty's implementation plan concentrates the majority of workforce reduction in AY2026/27 while assuming that a further 22.0 FTE reduction will occur through attrition / turnover over subsequent years. The consultation documentation contains no evidence explaining why the largest component of the proposed workforce reduction must occur before the contribution of those later workforce-planning mechanisms becomes known, nor any assessment of whether a more gradual trajectory would reduce the risk of unintended consequences for educational provision and for the wider obligations and commitments discussed elsewhere in this counterproposal. In the absence of such analysis, the Faculty has not demonstrated why the majority of workforce reduction must occur at the beginning of the implementation period rather than allowing the contribution of those mechanisms to become known.

This front-loading is particularly important in light of the evidential failures identified elsewhere in this counterproposal. Earlier sections have shown that the assumptions underpinning the proposed staffing trajectory, including the relationship between SSR and teaching capacity, are not reliably established on

the material disclosed. If those assumptions overstate the staffing capacity available to Engineering, the scale of workforce reduction said to be required to achieve the proposed trajectory will also be overstated. Concentrating the majority of that reduction in AY2026/27 therefore creates a material risk that staffing capacity will be removed before the validity of the assumptions underpinning the proposed trajectory has been demonstrated. That question goes directly to the necessity and timing of compulsory redundancies.

**1g(i) Projected workforce departures derived from University-provided data**

To examine whether workforce turnover is likely to be a material factor during the implementation period, projections were prepared using historical Engineering academic workforce departure data supplied by the University to the Union during consultation. These projections are derived solely from historical workforce departure patterns and do not attempt to model behavioural changes that may arise from organisational restructuring, voluntary severance schemes, retirement decisions or wider labour-market conditions; they are not presented as demonstrating that the required staffing reductions would be achieved automatically and should be read as indicative of the scale of workforce turnover rather than as a forecast. Their purpose is narrower: to assess whether workforce turnover is sufficiently material that it should have formed part of the University's assessment of the necessity, timing and scale of the proposed staffing reductions.

Job Family	Natural Attrition (FTE)					FoE 2030 target
	Low Case Annual	Base Case Annual	High Case Annual	Four-Year Base Case	Four Year Sensitivity Range	
Combined Academic Staff (R&T and T&CL)	15	18.7	22	74.7	60 to 88	59.54

*Table3: Projected Engineering academic workforce departures AY2026/27 to AY2029/30 (derived from University-disclosed workforce departure data AY2018–2024). Note: projections are expressed as projected FTE departures and cannot be interpreted as demonstrating that the required staffing reductions would be achieved automatically. They demonstrate that workforce turnover is likely to be a material factor during the implementation period and therefore required explicit consideration within any assessment of the necessity and scale of the proposed staffing trajectory.*

Year-one attrition alone, even under the high-case scenario (22.0 FTE), does not approach the 37.54 FTE reduction the University proposes to achieve in AY2026/27. The significance of the projections lies elsewhere: over the full four-year implementation period, even the low-case scenario (60.0 FTE) substantially exceeds the cumulative reduction the University's own consultation documentation assumes will be required, once the 22.0 FTE attrition contribution already relied upon for years two to four is taken into account. This creates a clear evidential burden on the University: if natural attrition operating over four years is capable of delivering a reduction of this scale, the University has not demonstrated why the great majority of the reduction must instead be front-loaded into year one, before that contribution has had the opportunity to be realised. Before adopting staffing reductions at the scale identified within the consultation documentation, the University should have demonstrated

that it had assessed the contribution that predictable workforce turnover, retirement, vacancy management and voluntary severance could make towards the required reduction, across the full implementation period rather than within year one alone.

**1g(ii) Recruitment indicators and Faculty planning assumptions**

This subsection does not seek to establish a Faculty staffing requirement. Its purpose is narrower: to show that the Faculty's own recent undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment indicators, together with its longer-term planning assumptions, do not depict a straightforward contraction scenario, and that this further weakens the confidence with which front-loaded, permanent staffing reductions are being proposed before effective teaching capacity, confirmed delivery requirements and the contribution of non-compulsory workforce-planning mechanisms have been established.

The Faculty's own Undergraduate subject-area summary data (accessed 5 June 2026 from FoE UG Subject Area Summary SharePoint site) records the following movements for 2026 against the 2023/24-2025/2026 baseline average (Table 4).

Measure	2023/24-2025/26 baseline average	2026/2027	2026/2027 vs baseline
Applications	7339	8771	+19.5%
Total offers	6055	7423	+22.6%
Accepts	1352	1502	+11.1%
Unconditional accepts	122	148	+21.0%
Insurance	1233	1481	+20.1%
Withdrawals	505	499	-1.3%

*Table 4: Faculty undergraduate SRAD subject-area summary, 2026/27 against 2023/24-2025/26 baseline average.*

These figures do not establish the staffing requirement for any individual discipline within the Faculty, and, as with the Engineering consultation document, this counterproposal does not treat them as doing so. They do, however, demonstrate that the Faculty-wide recruitment position in the years preceding implementation is one of increased demand across every recorded measure other than withdrawals, not one of straightforward decline. On the Union's own understanding, the most recent undergraduate intake represents its largest entering cohort on record. Since students' progress through the years of their programme, that cohort's size will by proxy increase enrolment in subsequent years of the relevant programmes as it progresses, independently of how any future application cycle performs. The proposed staffing trajectory, and in particular its reliance on reduced research-time allocation to release additional teaching capacity, must therefore be assessed against a student population that is on a rising, not a falling, trajectory.

The same caution arises from the Faculty's postgraduate taught recruitment data (Table 5), though the underlying picture here is more mixed than the undergraduate figures and is presented with that complexity made explicit.

Measure	2023/24-2025/26 baseline average	2026/2027	2026/2027 vs baseline	Change from 2025/2026 to 2026/2027
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<b>Applications</b>	3423	2978	-13%	+28%
<b>Total offers</b>	2303	2244	-3%	+23%
<b>Accepts</b>	1517	1331	-12%	+11%
<b>Unconditional accepts</b>	414	647	+56%	+81%

*Table 5: Faculty postgraduate taught (PGT) admissions summary, Grand Total including continuing students.*

The three-year average comparison shows that PGT applications, offers and accepts in 2026/27 remain below the 2023/24-2025/26 average, while unconditional accepts have risen substantially above that average, and this counterproposal does not understate the mixed nature of that picture. Its relevance lies primarily in the year-on-year trajectory most proximate to the implementation period: applications, offers, accepts and unconditional accepts have all increased materially between 2025/26 and 2026/27, indicating a Faculty recovering demand rather than one in continuing decline. This growth is concentrated in overseas students specifically: overseas unconditional accepts rose from 342 to 626 between 2025/26 and 2026/27, an increase of 83%, and stand 56% above the 2023/24-2025/26 average for that segment. Unconditional accepts are an early stage in the admissions pipeline and do not themselves guarantee deposit payment, visa approval or eventual enrolment; this counterproposal does not treat them as a confirmed intake figure. Their trajectory is nonetheless a leading indicator, and the direction of that trajectory - sharply upward, in the highest-fee segment of postgraduate recruitment, in the year of FN2 implementation - is not consistent with a Faculty whose postgraduate demand is in decline.

The Faculty's own longer-term planning assumptions are consistent with that wider recruitment picture. Faculty planning material, published on the Faculty's own SharePoint site, anticipates that, by 2030, higher-education applicant numbers could be approximately 30% above 2022 levels, within a 90% prediction interval of approximately +19.5% to +41%. This projection is used here with deliberate caution: it does not convert into a forecast of Engineering-specific demand, and it does not by itself demonstrate that any particular level of staffing is required. Its relevance is narrower. It shows that the Faculty's own planning context is one of anticipated applicant growth, or at minimum material uncertainty, rather than one of confirmed and sustained contraction.

The wider FN2 documentation points in a related direction. Appendix C states that additional applications are currently clustered in subject areas where the University has capacity constraints and is therefore unable, in most cases, to maximise the opportunity presented by those applications. It further confirms that intake projections incorporate course-, course-cluster- and school-level capacity restrictions, including hard constraints arising from shared teaching capacity and space. Read alongside the Engineering consultation document's description of FN2 as a process of aligning academic capacity to forecast demand and strategic priorities, this indicates that observed recruitment outcomes may, in some subject areas, be limited by available capacity rather than by underlying demand. Where that is the case, the rising accept figures set out above cannot straightforwardly be read as a simple, unconstrained measure of growing demand; they may equally reflect changes in the capacity made available to convert existing demand into accepts, including the possibility, which this counterproposal does not assert as established, that spare capacity exists in some Engineering subject areas that is only now being utilised.

Taken together, the undergraduate recruitment indicators, postgraduate taught admissions data and Faculty planning assumptions set out above do not demonstrate that the proposed staffing reductions are unnecessary. Nor does the possibility, raised by Appendix C, that some of this growth reflects capacity becoming available rather than demand alone; whichever explanation applies, the underlying fact is the same - student numbers are rising or recovering, not falling, and the proposed staffing trajectory must be assessed against that reality rather than against an assumption of decline. They do, however, demonstrate that the Faculty's own evidence base does not support the confidence with which permanent staffing capacity is being removed at pace and at the outset of the implementation period, before effective teaching capacity has been correctly established, before confirmed intake and delivery requirements are known, and before the contribution of attrition, vacancy management and voluntary severance has had an opportunity to become apparent.

This reinforces, rather than substitutes for, the necessity and front-loading concerns set out earlier in this section. Those concerns are sharpened, not lessened, by the recruitment evidence above. The case for front-loading compulsory reduction into year one is weakest when the population the remaining workforce will need to teach is growing rather than shrinking. It is weaker still where the consultation documentation itself relies on attrition, vacancy management and voluntary severance as mechanisms of workforce reduction over the implementation period without demonstrating why their contribution could not be allowed to become clearer before permanent year-one capacity is removed.

#### ***1g(iii) What the business case does not address***

The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the University modelled any of the following before adopting the proposed staffing trajectory:

- projected retirement and resignation rates during the implementation period;
- the contribution of voluntary severance to the required reduction;
- vacancy management and recruitment restraint as mechanisms for reducing establishment FTE;
- attrition-adjusted SSR trajectories showing what the Engineering SSR would be if natural workforce reduction were taken into account;
- the proportion of the proposed staffing reduction expected to arise through predictable workforce turnover rather than active intervention;
- the interaction between the proposed staffing trajectory and the Faculty's current undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment position, including the implications of the Faculty's largest recorded undergraduate intake progressing through subsequent years, and the recovery in overseas postgraduate taught demand evidenced in Failure 3, for whether front-loaded permanent reductions remain justified.

This is not a peripheral consideration. It goes directly to the proportionality of the proposed measures. Workforce reduction on the scale proposed, particularly when front-loaded in year one, would have significant consequences for staff, students, accreditation, educational provision and the Faculty's future strategic capacity. The Faculty has a responsibility to demonstrate, before implementing such reductions, that they are necessary and that less disruptive workforce-planning alternatives have been properly assessed. That demonstration requires modelling the alternatives. The consultation documentation does not contain that modelling. The burden of demonstrating that necessity rests with the University, and based on the material disclosed during consultation, that burden has not been discharged.

#### ***1g(iv) Relationship between workforce attrition and the need for workforce planning***

Workforce turnover, retirement, voluntary severance and vacancy management are non-compulsory mechanisms capable of contributing to workforce change. The consultation documentation contains no evidence demonstrating that the contribution of those mechanisms was comprehensively assessed before the proposed staffing trajectory was adopted.

Furthermore, staffing reductions should not result in an increase in workload, activity expectations or strategic commitments for remaining staff. Workforce reduction cannot be assumed to be sustainable if the volume of teaching, research, student-support, partnership, accreditation and engagement activity expected of the remaining workforce increases - and the recruitment evidence set out above indicates that the relevant activity is, if anything, rising rather than staying constant, in the absence of any agreed workload model against which that rise could even be measured. A smaller workforce teaching a larger and growing student population is a materially different proposition from a smaller workforce teaching a stable one, and the consultation documentation does not demonstrate that this distinction was considered.

Accordingly, the workforce-planning evidence presented in this counterproposal should be interpreted as an argument for exhausting non-compulsory measures and establishing the necessity of any further reductions through evidence, rather than as support for predetermined staffing targets or compulsory redundancy measures.

## **Section 2. Financial Viability and Risk**

Section 1 identified multiple areas in which the consultation documentation contains no evidence that material accreditation, regulatory, academic, strategic and workforce-planning considerations were assessed before the proposed staffing trajectory was adopted. This section examines the significance of those omissions. Its purpose is not to demonstrate that the risks identified below will necessarily materialise, but to demonstrate that they were sufficiently material that they required assessment before the proposed staffing trajectory was incorporated into the business case.

### **2.1 Financial Exposure**

The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the specific accreditation, regulatory, recruitment, partnership and workforce-planning risks identified in Section 1 were financially assessed, quantified or incorporated into the Engineering business case before the proposed staffing trajectory was adopted. Seven levels of exposure apply.

- Recruitment and revenue risk relating to UNMC and intercampus provision: The Engineering consultation documentation identifies international partnerships as a feature of Engineering provision, and FN2 links future growth to tri-campus integration and international activity. The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the implications of the proposed UK-campus staffing trajectory for international partnership provision, inter-campus pathways or associated recruitment and fee income were assessed before the trajectory was adopted.
- Architecture accreditation exposure: Architecture programmes within the Faculty are subject to LAM accreditation requirements that include explicit staffing benchmarks for design-studio provision. The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the implications of the proposed staffing trajectory for the Faculty's ability to satisfy Architecture accreditation requirements, or for any associated recruitment, reputational or international consequences, were assessed before the trajectory was adopted.

- Regulatory and consumer-protection exposure: The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the proposed staffing trajectory was formally assessed against the University's obligations under OfS Conditions B1 and B2 or the consumer-protection considerations reflected in OfS Condition C1. While no claim is made that the proposed trajectory is necessarily incompatible with those obligations, the consultation documentation contains no evidence that the University assessed the financial and reputational consequences that could follow from future complaints, regulatory intervention or adverse findings - including the remediation costs that any such consequence might generate, such as emergency staffing, programme restructuring, accreditation responses, student compensation, regulatory engagement and reputational recovery measures - or how any such costs compare with the savings attributed to the proposed staffing reductions.
- Strategic growth and partnership exposure: FN2 identifies future financial sustainability as dependent in part upon growth in degree apprenticeships, professional and work-based learning, commercial education, strategic partnerships, international activity and wider engagement, addressed further in Section 2.2. The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the University assessed whether the proposed staffing model would constrain its ability to pursue those opportunities, or how any resulting loss of future income and partnership activity compares with the savings attributed to the proposed staffing reductions.
- Duration of exposure: On the University's proposed multi-year staffing trajectory, any accreditation, regulatory, reputational or remediation risks associated with the reduced staffing model would not be confined to a single year but would extend across the implementation period. That point is sharpened by the SSR and accreditation analysis set out elsewhere in this counterproposal.
- Irreversibility and loss of institutional knowledge: Redundancy is not reversible in the way that vacancy management or recruitment restraint are. If the recruitment evidence addressed in Failure 3 is borne out and student numbers continue to rise, capacity removed through redundancy cannot necessarily be restored quickly or without loss of expertise. The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the University assessed the risk of needing, in substance, to reverse a compulsory reduction that subsequent demand shows to have been unnecessary, nor the costs and capacity loss that such a reversal would involve.
- Incremental financial benefit of staffing reductions not disclosed: Projected workforce attrition over the implementation period is substantial, and the Engineering consultation document also relies on vacancy surrender and the wider possibility of voluntary severance. The consultation documentation does not disclose any analysis isolating the incremental financial benefit of compulsory year-one staffing reduction once the contribution of attrition, vacancy management and voluntary departures is taken into account. The University has therefore not demonstrated, on the material disclosed, that the incremental financial benefit of front-loaded staffing reduction outweighs the associated accreditation, regulatory, partnership, recruitment and reputational risks identified in this counterproposal.

Individually, none of the risks identified above demonstrates that the proposed staffing trajectory will necessarily fail. Collectively, however, they demonstrate that the financial consequences of accreditation, regulatory, recruitment, partnership and strategic risks may be material. The issue raised by this counterproposal is therefore not whether those risks will arise, but whether they were formally assessed and incorporated into the business case before the proposed staffing trajectory was adopted. The consultation documentation contains no evidence that such an assessment was undertaken or disclosed.

## 2.2 Incompatibility with the FN2 Growth Strategy

This incompatibility is a further instance of the governance failure identified in Section 1, not merely a financial risk among others. The question this section requires the University to answer is direct: what assessment was undertaken to determine whether the proposed Engineering SSR trajectory is compatible with the degree apprenticeship, employer-funded learning, commercial education, strategic partnership and wider revenue-diversification activities identified in FN2 Appendix I? These activities are not peripheral to the business case; they are presented as mechanisms through which future financial sustainability will be achieved. No assessment demonstrating how the staffing requirements of those activities were incorporated into the proposed Engineering workforce trajectory has been identified in the consultation documentation. The paragraphs that follow demonstrate why that omission is not peripheral but central to the financial sustainability the business case claims to protect. The University's later disclosure of its general approach to proposal development does not identify any Engineering-specific assessment of how the staffing requirements of these growth mechanisms were incorporated into the proposed trajectory.

The FN2 business case presents the proposed Engineering SSR trajectory as linked to academic excellence and financial sustainability. Appendix I (Enabling Revenue Diversification and Growth) identifies revenue-diversification mechanisms through which that sustainability is to be supported, including degree apprenticeships, CPD, employer-funded and work-based learning, commercial education, strategic partnerships and globally aligned tri-campus activity across the UK, China and Malaysia. Engineering apprenticeship provision is specifically identified as an area of established strength and future growth. The University describes itself in Appendix I as the country's largest provider of both Data Science and Electro-Mechanical Engineering apprenticeships and commits to further growth in apprenticeship provision, employer engagement and partnership activity. The consultation documentation does not demonstrate that the proposed Engineering SSR trajectory is compatible with the growth mechanisms on which its stated financial sustainability depends. That is a material omission.

Degree apprenticeships require separate consideration. They are commissioned by employers and delivered through the apprenticeship funding system, rather than operating as a conventional undergraduate student market. Although the underlying funding model is mixed - with levy-paying employers drawing on levy funds and non-levy employers accessing government co-investment - the relevant point here is not simply who bears the ultimate training cost. It is that the employer, not the apprentice, decides whether to commission the programme and whether it represents an appropriate investment in workforce capability. Staffing intensity - and the student-staff ratio as its most visible proxy - is a legitimate consideration in that context. The consultation documentation contains no evidence demonstrating that the University assessed whether the proposed staffing trajectory is compatible with the employer-commissioned apprenticeship market it has identified as a strategic growth area.

The international dimension compounds this further. Several engineering accreditation systems in jurisdictions directly relevant to Nottingham's current and prospective international recruitment and partnership activity specify explicit staffing benchmarks. The following table sets out verified evidence from named accreditation bodies. These benchmarks are not cited as standards that apply directly to Nottingham's UK provision. They are presented as evidence that multiple engineering accreditation systems internationally regard staffing intensity as sufficiently important to specify numerically and to link explicitly to accreditation outcomes.

Jurisdiction	Accreditation Body	Verified Benchmark	Basis	Implication for proposed 22:1 trajectory	Source
Sri Lanka	IESL	12:1 or better (FTE basis)	Explicit accreditation benchmark. Table A3.9.4 gives requirements on how to calculate SSR	22:1 substantially exceeds; relevant to partnerships and scholarship-funded students	<a href="https://iesl.lk/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=43&amp;Itemid=162&amp;lang=en">https://iesl.lk/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=43&amp;Itemid=162&amp;lang=en</a> Note: Manual needs to be downloaded from section titled "IESL Manuals"
Nigeria	COREN	15:1 or better	Explicit regulatory benchmark evaluated on accreditation visits	22:1 substantially exceeds; Nigeria is a potential significant Engineering recruitment market	<a href="https://coren.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/EAC-PEVsGuidelines_25-08-2025.pdf">https://coren.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/EAC-PEVsGuidelines_25-08-2025.pdf</a>
Malaysia	BEM/EAC	20:1 or better (FTE basis)	Explicit statutory benchmark, Washington Accord signatory	Published SSR reaches benchmark in AY26/27; effective teaching FTE already exceeds it from year one	<a href="https://eac.org.my/v2/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Engineering-Programme-Accreditation-Standard-2024.pdf">https://eac.org.my/v2/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Engineering-Programme-Accreditation-Standard-2024.pdf</a>
India	NBA	20:1 linked to 6-year accreditation ; 25:1 linked to 3-year accreditation	Staffing level explicitly differentiates accreditation outcome	22:1 falls between the NBA's 20:1 benchmark for 6-year accreditation and the 25:1 threshold for 3-year accreditation. India's NBA framework explicitly differentiates accreditation quality by	<a href="https://www.nbaind.org/files/Guidelines%20for%20Faculty%20Updated%2025-08-2025%20Format%20250827151314.pdf">https://www.nbaind.org/files/Guidelines%20for%20Faculty%20Updated%2025-08-2025%20Format%20250827151314.pdf</a>

Jurisdiction	Accreditation Body	Verified Benchmark	Basis	Implication for proposed 22:1 trajectory	Source
				staffing level — a principle material to the credibility of partnerships and student mobility with Indian institutions.	
Pakistan	PEC	20:1 preferred; concerns arise above 20:1 and accreditation criteria identify 25:1 as an upper boundary	Explicit benchmark in accreditation documentation	22:1 falls within the PEC acceptable range (below 25:1) but above the preferred 20:1 benchmark; the effective teaching FTE SSR of 1:24.9 by AY29/30 approaches the acceptable boundary	<a href="https://www.pec.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Manual-of-Accreditation-Third-Edition-2019-Amended-Ver.-of-Manual-2014.pdf">https://www.pec.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Manual-of-Accreditation-Third-Edition-2019-Amended-Ver.-of-Manual-2014.pdf</a>
Kenya	EBK	25:1 or better (FTE)	Explicit regulatory benchmark	22:1 is within the Kenyan benchmark of 1:25, but the effective teaching FTE SSR of approximately 24.9:1 by AY29/30 reaches it. Kenya represents an emerging Engineering recruitment market where staffing	<a href="https://eackeny.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Engineering-Accreditation-Standard-6.02.2025.pdf">https://eackeny.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Engineering-Accreditation-Standard-6.02.2025.pdf</a>

Jurisdiction	Accreditation Body	Verified Benchmark	Basis	Implication for proposed 22:1 trajectory	Source
				intensity is a formal accreditation criterion.	

*Table 6: Verified international engineering accreditation benchmarks in jurisdictions relevant to Nottingham's growth strategy. Note: All benchmarks independently verified. These sources are cited solely as evidence that multiple engineering accreditation systems internationally specify staffing intensity numerically and link it to accreditation outcomes. No claim is made that these benchmarks apply directly to UK Engineering provision.*

These systems share a common characteristic: each treats staffing intensity as a sufficiently important quality indicator to specify it numerically and link it to accreditation outcomes. The benchmarks range from 12:1 to 25:1, with multiple systems explicitly differentiating accreditation outcomes according to staffing intensity and treating ratios at or below 20:1 more favourably. In every jurisdiction represented in the table, staffing intensity is treated as a sufficiently important educational variable to be specified numerically and linked to accreditation outcomes.

These benchmarks operate within the very jurisdictions from which the University seeks students, sponsored enrolments, strategic partnerships and wider international engagement. Multiple independent regulatory systems, operating across different legal traditions and educational cultures, have each concluded that staffing intensity warrants formal numerical specification in engineering education. On effective teaching FTE, as shown in Table 2, after removing the 25.45 FTE of research buyouts identified in the University's own consultation data, the proposed Engineering trajectory already exceeds 20:1 from year one of implementation.

Many students from these markets are not self-funded, and decisions about where to study, or where to send sponsored students, are often made or influenced by scholarship agencies, government ministries, employer sponsors and institutional partners rather than by the student alone. Student-staff ratio is not merely a domestically debated metric; it is a named, weighted indicator in the methodology of the QS World University Rankings, the most widely used international ranking system, where the "Faculty-Student Ratio" measure carries a formal weighting in the institution's overall score [[A guide to the methodology for the QS World University Rankings](#)]. Whether or not it is a perfect measure of educational quality, it is a metric with direct, quantifiable consequences for international reputation and ranking position, and one that sponsors, partners and prospective international students can readily access. The consultation documentation contains no evidence demonstrating that the University assessed whether a staffing model operating at the proposed levels is compatible with the markets, partnerships and growth opportunities identified within its own strategy.

## Findings

This counterproposal identifies three findings corresponding directly to the three failures set out in the Introduction.

**Finding 1: Failure to demonstrate that the proposed staffing trajectory was assessed before adoption**

The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the proposed Engineering staffing trajectory was formally assessed against the University's accreditation obligations, regulatory requirements, published commitments to students, international equivalence arrangements, or strategic growth objectives before it was incorporated into the business case. Nor does it contain evidence that the associated accreditation, regulatory, recruitment, partnership, financial and strategic risks were formally assessed before the proposed trajectory was adopted.

The issue is not whether the University ultimately concluded that the proposed trajectory remained compatible with those requirements and objectives. It is whether the basis for that conclusion was disclosed and capable of scrutiny. The University has since disclosed a generic, institution-level description of the factors said to inform proposal development; it has not disclosed the Engineering-specific basis for the conclusions reached. On the material available, the consultation documentation still does not disclose that Engineering-specific evidential basis. The University's own FN2 guidance, which requires comparable evidential standards of counterproposals, does not permit that deficiency to be excused in its own business case.

### **Finding 2: Failure to establish the teaching capacity represented by the SSR denominator**

The consultation documentation contains no evidence that the teaching capacity available to the Faculty was established before surplus staffing capacity was identified. The SSR methodology relies upon establishment FTE, but the documentation does not disclose the analysis used to determine the relationship between establishment FTE and effective teaching capacity.

The consultation documentation identifies substantial research buyouts within Engineering and simultaneously proposes changes to workload allocation intended to release additional teaching capacity. These factors indicate that establishment FTE and teaching capacity are not necessarily equivalent. The University has therefore identified surplus staffing capacity without demonstrating how the teaching capacity represented by the SSR denominator was established - a conclusion compounded by the absence of any workload-allocation model, and by the recruitment and planning evidence discussed in Finding 3, which indicates that the Faculty's current and projected student demand does not, on its own terms, support the confidence with which any surplus capacity has been assumed.

### **Finding 3: Failure to demonstrate the necessity of the proposed workforce-reduction trajectory**

The consultation documentation relies upon workforce attrition and turnover to achieve a substantial proportion of the proposed workforce reduction over the implementation period. However, it contains no equivalent analysis demonstrating why workforce reduction at the proposed scale and pace are required before the contribution of predictable attrition, retirement, voluntary severance and vacancy management has been assessed and allowed to occur.

The University has therefore not demonstrated that the proposed workforce-reduction trajectory is necessary, nor that alternative workforce-planning scenarios were adequately assessed before it was adopted. This is compounded by the front-loading of the proposed reductions into the first year of implementation, despite attrition operating across the full implementation period being capable of exceeding, on the University's own low-case figures, the cumulative reduction required over that same period, before the validity of the teaching-capacity assumptions in Finding 2 can be known, and before the proposed staffing trajectory has been tested against the Faculty's own current undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment evidence, delivery requirements and planning assumptions. The consequences of proceeding without that evidential basis are not readily reversible: compulsory redundancy cannot straightforwardly be undone if subsequent demand shows the reduction to have been unnecessary, with

the institutional knowledge and capacity lost in the process unlikely to be recovered by simple re-recruitment.

### **Required Evidential Basis Before Redundancies Proceed**

The findings set out in Section 3 do not seek to establish a particular staffing trajectory. They establish that the evidential basis for the proposed staffing trajectory has not been demonstrated within the consultation documentation. The requirements set out below are therefore not additional obligations introduced by this counterproposal, nor do they describe a process by which compulsory redundancy could ever become acceptable. They represent the evidential basis that would need to exist for the three findings identified above to be addressed; the Unions' position remains that compulsory redundancies must not happen at all, regardless of what that evidential basis shows. Non-compulsory departures, including retirement, resignation and voluntary severance, are unaffected by this and may continue to occur in the normal course.

Before decisions are implemented to achieve the AY2026/27 Engineering staffing profile, the University should do one of the following: disclose evidence demonstrating that the assessments set out below have already been undertaken; undertake those assessments and disclose them; or pause implementation until that evidence exists and has been disclosed.

#### ***Educational, accreditation and regulatory assessment***

The University has disclosed a generic, institution-level description of the factors said to inform proposal development. That disclosure does not substitute for the Engineering-specific basis requested below. The University should disclose the educational, accreditation, quality-assurance and governance basis on which the proposed Engineering SSR trajectory was adopted (see 1c). This should include the process through which the 22:1 target was determined, the governance bodies responsible for its approval, and the assessment undertaken to determine its compatibility with:

- the University's published commitments regarding teaching standards, quality assurance and intercampus mobility (1a, 1b);
- Engineering provision operating across Nottingham and UNMC, including the inter-campus transfer programme and the Inter-Campus Exchange Programme (1a);
- the 20:1 FTE benchmark formally evaluated by a Washington Accord-recognised accreditation body operating within the University's own international ecosystem and the implications of adopting a materially different staffing assumption (1b, 1f);
- OfS Conditions B1 and B2 (1d);
- consumer-protection obligations reflected in OfS Condition C1 and CMA guidance (1d);
- Architecture accreditation requirements operating within the Faculty (1e); and
- the international partnership, scholarship-funded recruitment, employer-funded learning, degree apprenticeship, commercial education and strategic growth activities identified within FN2 (2.2).

#### ***SSR methodology and teaching-capacity assessment***

The University should disclose the methodology used to determine the staffing capacity represented by the Engineering SSR denominator (see 1f). This should include:

- the specific measure of staffing resource used within the SSR calculation;
- the treatment of research buyouts, workload allocation and non-teaching commitments;

- the workload-allocation methodology, if any, used to determine how teaching, research, student-support, administrative, professional and engagement activities were translated into the teaching-capacity assumptions underpinning the SSR denominator, including the relationship between that methodology and the proposed reduction in standard research-time allocation set out in Appendix E;;
- the relationship assumed between establishment FTE and teaching capacity;
- the basis on which surplus staffing capacity was identified; and
- the analysis used to determine the workforce reduction requirement derived from that assessment.

### *Workforce-planning and necessity assessment*

The University should disclose the analysis undertaken to determine whether the proposed workforce-reduction trajectory is necessary and proportionate (see 1g). This should include:

- the assumptions used regarding retirement, resignation and workforce attrition;
- the expected contribution of voluntary severance and vacancy management;
- the proportion of workforce reduction expected to arise through natural turnover;
- the basis on which the proposed workforce-reduction trajectory was adopted before the contribution of those mechanisms became known; and
- the assessment of the proposed staffing trajectory against the Faculty's current undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment evidence, confirmed intake and delivery requirements, and the Faculty's own planning assumptions regarding future applicant demand, so that any claimed surplus teaching capacity is tested against actual and projected student demand rather than inferred from the proposed staffing trajectory alone.

### *Financial risk and irreversibility assessment*

The University should disclose the assessment undertaken of the financial risks identified in Section 2, including:

- the financial and reputational consequences of the recruitment, accreditation, regulatory and partnership risks identified in 2.1;
- how the financial savings attributable specifically to the proposed compulsory staffing reductions, as distinct from savings arising through attrition, vacancy management and voluntary departures, were calculated and isolated, and compared against the accreditation, regulatory, partnership, recruitment and reputational risks identified in this counterproposal;
- the assessment, if any, of how those risks persist across the multi-year implementation period rather than arising as a single-year event;
- the assessment, if any, of the risk that compulsory redundancies cannot readily be reversed if subsequent demand evidence shows the reduction to have been unnecessary, and of the institutional knowledge and capacity that would be lost in that event; and
- the assessment undertaken of the compatibility of the proposed staffing trajectory with the growth mechanisms identified in FN2 Appendix I, addressed in 2.2.

Where the University cannot provide evidence demonstrating that these assessments have already been undertaken, they should be undertaken and disclosed, or implementation should be paused until they are.

The assessments identified above should be completed before implementation because their purpose is to inform decision-making rather than retrospectively evaluate decisions that have already been taken. Once compulsory redundancies have been implemented, the consequences cannot necessarily be reversed if subsequent analysis identifies educational, accreditation, regulatory or strategic concerns that should have been considered beforehand.

The consultation documentation does not disclose any of the matters identified above. Without it, the evidential basis for the proposed staffing trajectory remains incomplete.

### **Alignment with the University's Self-Assessment Criteria**

This counterproposal has been assessed against the five criteria the University applies to its own proposals, and against the supporting modelling checklist, to confirm that it engages with the same framework by which the draft business case is itself evaluated.

1. Vision and rationale alignment. This counterproposal is intended to support, rather than obstruct, the University's stated objectives of sustainable academic excellence and long-term financial sustainability. It seeks to ensure that staffing decisions are grounded in evidence and assessed against accreditation obligations, regulatory requirements, published commitments to students, strategic growth objectives and workforce-planning considerations before implementation. It therefore supports educational quality, student experience, institutional sustainability and effective governance.
2. Financial viability. The counterproposal does not rely upon speculative financial benefits. It identifies material financial risks arising from accreditation, regulatory, recruitment, partnership and strategic-growth assumptions that have not been demonstrated within the consultation documentation, including the risk that redundancies cannot readily be reversed if subsequent demand evidence shows the reduction to have been unnecessary, with the associated loss of institutional knowledge and capacity that reversal would involve. It also considers the contribution of workforce turnover, retirement, voluntary severance and vacancy management, together with the Faculty's own current recruitment indicators and longer-term planning assumptions, as workforce-planning variables that require assessment before staffing decisions are implemented.
3. Delivery feasibility. The proposal is immediately deliverable. It requires either disclosure of the assessments identified within the counterproposal, where those assessments have already been undertaken, or completion and disclosure of those assessments before implementation of the proposed staffing trajectory. The proposal identifies educational, accreditation, regulatory, financial, workforce-planning and governance risks arising from implementation without a demonstrated evidential basis, and provides a proportionate mechanism for addressing them.
4. People, culture and community. The counterproposal identifies the absence of any disclosed analysis demonstrating how teaching, assessment, student-support and engagement workload will be sustained by a smaller workforce, particularly where student numbers are rising rather than falling. It highlights that staffing reductions should not be assumed to be sustainable for remaining staff if the volume of activity expected of them increases, and that no workload model exists against which this could even be tested.
5. Comparative advantage. The draft business case proceeds on the basis of a staffing trajectory whose educational, accreditation, regulatory, strategic and workforce-planning assumptions have not been demonstrated within the consultation documentation. This counterproposal

adopts a fundamentally different approach. Rather than proposing an alternative staffing ratio, it requires the evidential basis for the proposed trajectory to be disclosed and assessed before implementation.

6. Modelling checklist. The assumptions used in this counterproposal are stated and sourced throughout, with citations provided to the underlying accreditation, regulatory and consultation documentation. The draft business case and its supporting appendices have been consulted throughout. Where data has not been available, including the underlying LAM accreditation manuals referenced in 1e, this has been identified explicitly, and the specific information required has been specified.

## Conclusion

This counterproposal does not propose a particular Engineering SSR. Its conclusion is narrower.

The University has since disclosed a generic, institution-level description of the considerations said to inform proposal development across the institution. That disclosure does not demonstrate that the proposed Engineering staffing trajectory was assessed against the accreditation, regulatory, academic, strategic and workforce-planning matters identified in this counterproposal, that the teaching capacity represented by the SSR denominator was reliably established, or that the proposed workforce-reduction trajectory is necessary - the three findings set out above. Nor does it demonstrate that the associated accreditation, regulatory, recruitment, partnership, financial and strategic risks were formally assessed before the trajectory was adopted. These are not independent concerns. Together they establish a consistent evidential deficiency. This is not a precautionary concern about a future risk. The evidential deficiencies identified in this counterproposal arise immediately upon implementation of the proposed staffing trajectory rather than at some later point in the planning period.

The University's own consultation framework requires counterproposals to be evidence-based and capable of scrutiny. The same evidential standard should apply to the business case on which redundancy decisions are founded.

This counterproposal is intended to support, rather than obstruct, the University's stated objectives of sustainable academic excellence and long-term financial sustainability. Requiring a demonstrable evidential basis before irreversible staffing reductions are implemented protects the University from avoidable accreditation, regulatory, recruitment, partnership and reputational risks, while helping to ensure that strategic initiatives identified within FN2, including intercampus mobility and international growth activity, are not undermined by decisions taken without adequate assessment. It also protects against a risk that cannot be remedied after the fact: compulsory redundancy is not readily reversible, and the institutional knowledge and capacity lost through it cannot simply be restored if subsequent evidence shows the reduction to have been unnecessary.

The purpose of this counterproposal is therefore not to substitute one staffing trajectory for another. It is to require that the proposed trajectory is supported by evidence capable of scrutiny before irreversible decisions are taken. The evidence presented in this document demonstrates that workforce turnover, retirement, voluntary severance, vacancy management, current recruitment patterns and the Faculty's own planning assumptions are all sufficiently material that they require formal assessment before irreversible staffing reductions are implemented. The alternative proposed here is accordingly not merely the production of further evidence; it is the deferral and re-sequencing of irreversible reductions

until the evidential and workforce-planning steps identified in this counterproposal have been completed.

Counterproposals of this kind typically identify specific cost savings or income-generation measures capable of being costed and compared directly against the savings sought through the proposed redundancies. At the scale of a single Faculty restructuring affecting Engineering in its entirety, and within the timeframe available during consultation, that task was not realistically achievable within this counterproposal. The consultation itself was structured and disclosed at Faculty level, without a departmental or programme-level breakdown of the staffing trajectory, recruitment position or financial assumptions involved. A fully costed alternative staffing and revenue model would have required that disaggregation, together with institutional data, workforce-planning authority and modelling capacity that rest with the University, and a period of analysis substantially longer than this consultation response allowed. This counterproposal's purpose is accordingly narrower and more achievable: to demonstrate that the evidential basis required to justify the proposed trajectory, by the University's own institutional standards, has not been established - and to require that basis before the trajectory is implemented.

Before decisions are implemented to achieve the proposed Engineering staffing trajectory, the University should do one of the following: disclose the evidential basis demonstrating that the assessments identified in this counterproposal have already been undertaken; complete and disclose those assessments; or pause implementation until that evidential basis exists and has been disclosed. Until that evidential basis is provided, the proposed staffing trajectory has not been demonstrated to rest upon a reliable educational, accreditation, regulatory, strategic and workforce-planning foundation.

# Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

## School of Health Sciences

### Summary of FN2 Proposals

- Closing the BSc courses in Health Promotion and Public Health; Children's Nursing; and Mental Health Nursing with teach out to 2028
- Increasing SSR from 6:1 to 14:1
- Reduction of 47.78FTE across 53 people through redundancy and non-renewal of fixed term contracts
- Closure of research themes Behavioural and Complex interventions and Future Health
- Reduction by over half of research theme Child, Maternal and Family Health

### Risks of FN2 Proposals

#### *Loss of disciplinary breadth, impairing Education and Student Experience outcomes and risking declining recruitment.*

Across the School of Health Sciences, teaching is delivered with multi-disciplinary support to provide access to specialist knowledge when teaching on topics such as mental health care, learning disability care, perinatal care or paediatric care where these topics are not the primary focus of a course discipline. In some cases such as Nursing, the Nursing and Midwifery Council's standards for student nurse education recognise the need for all nursing students to learn about the specific health needs of young people or people with learning disabilities or mental illnesses. The proposed significant reduction in staff, particularly those in more specialist areas presents a key risk to providing all Health Sciences students with access to specialist teaching that meets the expectations of PSRBs.

Such a loss impacts on students' education and preparation to become high quality, holistic practitioners, risks student experience considerations around a felt sense of adequate academic support, and as a result these measures threaten the recruitment to remaining courses that have historically recruited well.

#### *Increase in workload leading to higher risk of workplace stress and staff sickness*

It was disclosed by the University in 2025 that 7420 days of sickness declared as work related stress were taken between 1/9/23-14/3/25 across the institution, equivalent to just over 34 years of days in full time work. It has also been identified as a key theme of the People and Culture Surveys 2023 and 2025 that wellbeing is a primary concern for staff. The proposed increase to SSR, and the resulting workload increase of this change, along with the redistribution of school, faculty and curriculum leadership responsibilities as staffing reduces presents a significant risk to unmanageable resource demand, resulting in further harm to staff members' health.

If the current risk and impact of work related stress is already very high, it can be expected that the proposed changes will lead to direct harm on employees' health. Not only is this an ethical concern of

workplace health and safety, but it also risks other resource strain as additional workload is distributed among colleagues to compensate for high levels of sickness absences.

***Decline in teaching, academic support and pastoral support due to higher SSRs, proposed to more than double. This risks significant decline to NSS scores, recruitment, league table rankings and graduate outcomes***

The current SSR average for the School is 6:1, and the proposal suggests this increases to 14:1 by 2029/30 alongside a staffing reduction of 43%. The School currently maintains this low SSR in order to meet the PSRB requirements around minimum teaching hours, minimum levels of supervision in teaching such as Simulated Practice Learning, and minimum levels of safety and quality assurance across clinical placements to ensure accreditation is maintained. In the case of Sports Rehabilitation, the SSR for teaching staff is a fixed requirement of accreditation and the School is currently at risk of breaching this requirement if expected to over recruit for the 2026 cohort intake, potentially losing this popular course by force.

The current SSR provides teaching staff time to deliver the academic and pastoral support to students that allow student to achieve such consistently high graduate outcomes. By reducing the capacity for this support by more than half can be expected to reduce graduate outcomes in grades and employability, and negatively impact NSS scores. As a result, course specific league table rankings and recruitment will decline.

***Inadequate staffing to deliver courses provided by the School***

Although many courses are to remain open to recruitment, the BSc Midwifery, BSc Adult Nursing and MSc/PGDip Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) teaching teams are all proposed to reduce staffing by 25%, 27.5% and 19% respectively. Each of these courses is held to accreditation standards that require sufficient staffing to uphold. For example, the CBT course requires all students undertake a minimum of 40 hours clinical supervision across the single year program in groups no bigger than one supervisor to four students. To meet this requirement with a cohort of 25 students (as for 25/26) the team must deliver at least 0.6 days FTE each week to meet this single requirement of the course, accounting for 28.5% of the team's capacity, without considering teaching, marking, leadership or other workload resource requirements. The proposed reduction to this team by 0.4FTE may appear negligible, but will have significant impact on workload and capacity, for example with clinical supervision rising to 35% of the team's FTE without any changes to teaching and assessment resource requirements.

Similarly, if the Midwifery team is to be reduced by 2 from 8 to 6FTE, while maintaining the current TON of 65 students, then resource again becomes significantly constrained. Without accounting for School level leadership roles, citizenship or CPD, using the School's Workload Planner, the FTE required to run the BSc Midwifery course for 65 students in line with PSRB requirements is 12545.4hours or 7.9FTE. Therefore, the proposed reduction would result in inadequate staff resources to meet students' needs and accreditation requirements. This would also result in no members of the Midwifery team having capacity to contribute to wider school citizenship, leadership or public engagement.

To sustain high quality - or even satisfactory quality - courses for all School of Health Sciences students, while contributing to the strategic leadership of the School (or the proposed future College of Health) there is simply no resource capacity to tolerate the proposed staffing reductions in any team. Continuing with the proposed staffing reductions threatens not only the capability of the School to deliver high quality teaching and research in line with the objectives of Future Nottingham, but it also presents substantial predictable risk to the health and safety of staff members through excessive unsustainable workloads which the University has a legal duty to protect its employees against.

## **Mental Health Nursing**

### *Summary of FN2 Proposal*

“It is proposed that, if the proposed closure of Nursing (Mental Health) BSc is implemented, there will be a phased reduction of staff from 9.8 FTE to 0 FTE and from 10 employees to 0 employees as the course is taught out.”

### *Risks of FN2 proposals*

1. **To meet Nursing and Midwifery Council (PSRB) accreditation requirements for the BSc Nursing (adult) course which is expected to continue, it is essential to retain a mental health nursing, and a learning disability nursing specialist to teach on mental health and learning disability care.** Without such specialist knowledge provided, the students on the adult nursing course would have insufficient guidance and exposure to these fields of practice, for credible delivery of these elements of the curriculum, not only risking students’ learning outcomes, but also PSRB accreditation compliance.
2. **The mental health and learning disability team provides specialist teaching on mental health care and learning disability care to students across all Health Sciences undergraduate courses.** For example, team members are closely involved with the delivery of MIDW2016, a 2nd year BSc Midwifery module on perinatal mental health. In addition, the team delivers various specialist classes across all undergraduate courses in the School of Health Sciences covering risk management, ethical decision making, interpersonal and therapeutic skills, psychosocial interventions, communication adaptation, leadership skills, Makaton, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Total reduction of staff from this staff group would result in loss of specialist teaching for students on all remaining SHS UG courses, leaving students underprepared for meeting their patients’ needs, and reducing the marketability of graduates.
3. **Every module on the mental health nursing degree course is shared with BSc Adult Nursing and BSc Children’s Nursing.** Similarly, there is only one 10 credit optional module exclusive to the mental health nursing course, which is staffed by the PGDip Cognitive Behavioural Therapy team. **Therefore, the closure of this course would not generate teaching efficiencies, would result in no staffing reductions, and would not significantly reduce curriculum delivery resourcing.**
4. **Graduates of the BSc Mental Health Nursing perform very well in accessing high skilled employment.** For graduates in 2023, the course ranked 3rd in the region and across the Russell

Group for graduate outcomes in mental health nursing. The course averaged 96.8% of graduates in high skilled employment of further study between 2017 and 2023, above the University average performance by 10.68 percentage points in the same time. Losing this course and the students it attracts will reduce institution wide metrics for graduate outcomes.

5. **Students studying BSc Nursing (mental health) are highly diverse, supporting the university to meet its OFS set objectives for diversity.** We have substantially higher proportional representation of disabled (40%, compared to UoN's 24.6% average for the 25/26 academic year cohort) BAME (65%, UoN=51.7%), FSM eligible (10%, UoN=0.48%) and WP eligible students (60%, UoN=22.6%). The publication of this positive data by the OFS supports student recruitment from disadvantaged groups, supporting wider recruitment KPIs. **The removal of a highly accessible course such as this among others will appear to potential applicants as a deterrent, risking reduced applications to other courses.**
6. Students on this course with marginalised experiences such as disabled and WP eligible students consistently perform higher in this course than their peers on other courses. For example, 77.8% of mature mental health nursing students achieved a good degree in the past three years compared to 74.8% across UoN, and similarly 84.5% of disabled students on the course achieved this in the same time period compared to 76.1% across the university. **By losing the full staff team associated with achieving these exceptional results through highly skilled pastoral and academic support, the School of Health Sciences and the wider institution lose access to experienced staff with capacity to maximise marginalised students' experience and outcomes.**

### *Alternative proposals*

#### **1. Integrated Masters in Advanced Mental Health Nursing**

This proposed program would provide a nationally unique offering for mental health nurse training as a four year integrated masters degree course with a focus on advanced clinical skills. Masters degrees in nursing often provide dual registration preparation or focus on advanced leadership skills preparing students for professional progression through managerial pathways. However, what comparable courses do not provide is support to accelerate graduates through clinically specialist pathways towards roles such as Advanced Clinical Practice or Nurse Consultant roles. In addition, due to the fundamental nature of the NMC's 2019 Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (SSSA) presenting a minimal consideration of the specialist requirements of mental health practice (Pearson et al., 2025) students on Mental Health Nursing courses that exclusively meet SSSA set learning outcomes are graduating students inadequately prepared for the professional environment (Haslam, 2023; Pearson et al., 2024).

This concern has been raised by employers and patients as a risk to the provision of high quality healthcare for a growing and highly vulnerable population (Pearson et al., 2024). The concern that the current BSc Nursing (mental health) course is insufficiently focused on mental health care is one that is consistently raised in NSS feedback across at least the past five years. Final year mental health nursing students repeatedly report through NSS that while the support from their lecturers is exceptionally positive, they feel insufficiently prepared in mental health clinical skills and that the curriculum provided was inappropriately focused on developing physical health clinical skills. Therefore, as part of maximising

both student outcomes and education for employability with highly positive reputational impact, and improving student experience, the proposed course will develop the institution's position as a valued provider of mental health nursing education for successful recruitment.

The proposed course eliminates these concerns of employers, mental health patients, and prospective students by providing a course that produces highly skilled mental health care professionals with targeted expertise. It also provides a direct recruitment pipeline to the School's MSc Advanced Clinical Practice for experienced registered professionals. To achieve this, it would be necessary to redesign the existing course material in such a way that maximises mental health focused content. However, this process would be considerably less resource intensive than starting the process from scratch because some course content is pre-existing within other related courses such as the PGDip and MSc in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, the MA Research Methods (health), MPH Public Health and BA Social Work, and easily adapted from the current BSc course to support an efficient and rapid development. Furthermore, designing a course such as this would give scope to maximise the full use of expertise within this teaching team, providing students with access to the highest quality teaching.

For applicants to this course, it would be appropriate to require a higher entry tariff, supporting the FN2 goals of raising this metric. In addition, Win/Loss data across the past three years has shown that the current BSc course loses a significant proportion of high tariff applicants to integrated masters courses as part of the loss of 45% of the top scoring interviewees to a range of other courses. Applicants are interested in studying nursing at Nottingham, but they are more interested in studying a master's degree in nursing, so giving them access to both through this proposal will support high quality recruitment of those who perform best at interview along with high grade tariffs.

Where the volume of applicants is of concern to the review panel, the 2025/26 application cycle has seen a national increase in nursing applications, suggesting a return to the positive trend of industrial growth. Throughout the market fluctuations of the past five years, the BSc Nursing (mental health) course maintained a 3% market share that reflects the potential sustainability of this proposed course in a returning market.

It is recognised that clinical placement capacity represents a potential barrier to maximal growth on healthcare courses. However, this resource demand is also due to reduce within the next year as the NMC reduces the minimum placement hours from 2300 to an expected 1800, which along with the extended course length reduces resource demand by 41.3%, facilitating a larger total student body. Should there become a need to expand the placement capacity, there is scope for this to be explored through the charity sector, psychotherapy providers, research teams and educational contexts. The School has seen great success in the recent expansion to placement provision in education for the BSc Physiotherapy course, and a similar model could be effectively implemented within this course as a further unique selling point.

Similarly, by meeting the needs of students it would be easily feasible to improve NSS and student experience outcome scores, furthering the reputational benefits of this proposal. Developing this proposed course would allow the University of Nottingham to be a national leader in mental health nurse training with a highly marketable unique offering that provides a high value opportunity to prospective students, and rebuilds our strong reputation with local and national employers.

#### References:

Haslam, M. (2023). The erosion of mental health nursing: the implications of the move towards genericism. *British Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 12(1), pp.1–6

Pearson, M., Guerin, E., Doran, D., Payne, G., Carter, T. & Wright, N. (2025) Examining current challenges and future potential in mental health nurse education. *Mental Health Practice*. 29(1). Pp.16-21

Pearsson, M., Long, L., Baker, C., Doran, D. & Pringle, A. (2024) "It's really important work...and celebrating that, I think, is really important" - co-produced qualitative research into future of mental health nurse education. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. 33, pp.2017-2079

## **2. Enhanced Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training offer for Registered Nurses**

Given the concerns of employers highlighted above including those supported by Pearson and colleagues (2024), a lower intensity alternative for providing a sustainable answer to these concerns would be to provide an enhanced package of mental health care focused CPD training for Registered Nurses. This approach would also support the Nottingham Lifelong Learning Initiative proposed above across the institution. This could be achieved by providing courses in targeted mental health care skills well within the skillset of the existing mental health and learning disability team such as ethically complex risk management, non-medical prescribing, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) skills, communicating through Makaton, advanced communication skills, child and adolescent mental health, caring for people with both learning disabilities and mental illness, or working with complex patients to support engagement with services.

As much as courses such as those listed here would be of high value to Registered Mental Health Nurses and other mental health professionals, these courses would also be of high value to Registered General Nurses, Registered Children's Nurses and Registered Learning Disability Nurses as the demand for nursing care responsive to mental health needs increases nationally and locally. Similarly, as this demand increases in nursing care, the same demand increases for physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work and allied health professional practice, where curricula for gaining professional registration may not adequately cover mental health care practice, despite each of these professional groups working in mental health specialist settings and regularly with patients needing mental health support while accessing physical healthcare or social care services. Therefore, providing CPD training that specialises in this area would have a broad population to recruit from.

To meet the needs of the healthcare professional population, it is essential that any teaching delivery is flexible to accommodate irregular shift patterns and anticipated fluctuations in workload across the year such as winter flu season. Other typical risks of CPD training offerings are the resource intensity required

to facilitate them and healthcare Trusts facing funding restrictions for supporting employee development. Therefore, an innovative solution is required that manages these concerns. This solution follows the model used by MA English (online), approaching postgraduate education in a flexible, student-centred way.

The English (online) course is structured in such a way that modules (aka pods) are shorter, equivalent to around 10 credits each, work is self directed and assessment submission points allow enrolled students to submit at any of the three submission deadlines across the year. Students have the opportunity to select their pods in any order and combination on the MA English (online) course, but there is capacity for introducing prerequisite study requirements should this be necessary for the proposed context. Completion of six pods (a 'hexapod') is equivalent to a PGCert, twelve are equivalent to a PGDip and eighteen make an MA/MSc. By building up in this way, the institution has the potential to offer 'bitesize' CPD training courses at pod or hexapod level that can then be built upon into achieving a full degree certificate over an extended period, further extending the target market to accommodate a range of interests and maximising the lifetime value of each student as they return across their careers.

The proposed course would be designed as self-directed study with access to synchronous and asynchronous academic support from module facilitators, as is the current operating model of the MA English (online). Providing such a flexible approach as this would meet the specific education needs of the target market population by accommodating shift patterns and the competing pressures that are common in mature postgraduate students working alongside their studies. As a result, this flexibility would be highly attractive to the target market, supporting successful recruitment.

Another flexibility component built into the model course that would be applied to this proposed program relates to assessment submission. Unlike a typical module with a single submission point in the year, students are instead provided with three deadlines across a year that they can submit to. The student has full autonomy to spread the workload of their studies appropriately across the year to work around their personal circumstances. This approach has the added benefit of reducing administrative load and academic workload planning associated with processing Extenuating Circumstance requests by simply allowing assessments to be submitted at the next opportunity in a few months' time. Similarly, this approach to assessments and flexibility of study provide for common accessibility needs through a fully integrated approach, reducing additional input requirements from professional service teams.

The key strength of this model is the enormous breadth of subject areas available for study within the pod catalogue, allowing maximum choice to students, adapting to their personal clinical context and professional development interests. A comparable breadth of subjects could be offered by incorporating specialist modules by staff across the current Schools of Health Sciences (particularly the existing Mental Health and Learning Disability Nursing team), Psychology, Sociology and Social Policy, Medicine, Politics and International Relations and possibly others. As a result, the course would appeal to a wider audience by supporting both deep and narrow professional development in one specialism and broader learning across specialisms to support transitions between services and providing access to professional

development opportunities that would be otherwise unavailable under a typical postgraduate degree or CPD course offering.

While introducing an innovative new course such as this may initially appear resource intensive, much of the groundwork has already been laid through the funding provided for the development of the MA English (online). For example, the market research for the viability of such a program on a local and global market has been completed showing strong viability, as reinforced by the consistent recruitment of roughly 200 registered students at any time since the course started, despite a minimal marketing budget. Similarly, the development of applying the innovative structure to existing UoN systems through RAA has been completed, allowing replication of the current arrangement for an equivalent Health Sciences program. As a result of this work, the only notable starting resources required would be time allocated to pod facilitators to design their short courses, and for this information to be made available to the target market through marketing processes such as uploading the program to the prospectus.

The typical running costs of a course with this design are relatively low when compared to a traditionally structured course offering of the equivalent credit value. For example, when a course is running students access this asynchronously to complete self-directed work. This eliminates time and physical resource demand for room and equipment bookings on campus, reducing financial costs and APM resource demands. It also allows lecturers to engage more flexibly and responsively with their student group, allowing greater autonomy of workload management to individual lecturers in support of staff wellbeing, and easy implementation of reasonable adjustments for staff members as required. It is also possible for the assessment deadlines to be allocated to align with current assessment weeks for ease of administration, or to intentionally be misaligned to this, supporting markers and assessment teams to spread their workload across the year, reducing the negative impacts of high intensity working patterns.

As demonstrated above (page 45), the potential for income generation of this proposal is significant with even a conservatively estimated cohort. For 150-200 additional learners per year at an average income of £4,000-£5,000 through a combination of diplomas, certificates, degrees and individual pod courses would generate £600,000-£1m in annual revenue.

This alternative proposal provides an opportunity to bring to the higher education market a CPD and post graduate training course for a broad range of healthcare professionals that would allow them to study a breadth of mental health care and related subjects in a flexible and accessible format to meet the specific needs of this target market. While there are some initial resources required to design the course offering, these are limited with much of this in place and historically funded for an existing course. Therefore, this proposal offers a potentially lucrative means of meeting market interest through a unique and innovative course that requires minimal running costs to maintain.

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while

protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of Medicine

### Overview

In the School of Medicine, FN2 proposals relating to research are grouped by specialism, with varied proposals and impacts in each of those areas. This counter proposal only covers Hearing Sciences - Scotland Section, and represents only a small part of a much larger School. UoNUCU remains concerned by the exceptionally high volume of staff headcount reduction within Medicine and the approaches taken to make such a change. We may deliver additional counterproposals covering other areas in the future.

### Hearing Sciences - Scotland Section (HSSS)

#### *Summary of FN2 proposals*

“Hearing - proposed 1.8 FTE reduction (from 29.96 FTE to 28.16 FTE and from 35 to an estimated 33 employees).

The Hearing centre undertakes a range of fundamental science, animal, efficacy and effectiveness research. The current Hearing BRC theme, previous MRC hearing centre and previous BRU have provided strong translational work. However, it is spread across a number of sites including a small branch campus in Glasgow. It is proposed that hearing research activity be focused at Nottingham where contributions to teaching, and the local research environment will be most effective, and therefore a reduction of 1.8FTE.”

#### *Alternative proposal*

We interpret the proposal ‘that hearing research activity be focused at Nottingham’ as meaning that the HSSS team would be relocated to Nottingham. However, we propose retaining the HSSS team in its current location.

### Overview

Hearing Sciences is spread across bases in Nottingham and Glasgow, and totals 35 employees. The Glasgow base is the workplace of 11 staff members including 1x Professor and 1x Associate Professor both partially internally funded with sliding scale external funding, and 2x Senior Research Fellows, 3x Research Fellows, 3x Research Assistants, and 1x Systems Administrator, each externally funded.

The team has maintained grant funding consistently over its 45-year existence, including the past 10 years as part of the University of Nottingham. At present HSSS staff hold 12 grants totalling £4,330,000 across UKRI, industry and charity funding. Margins across these grants average 28.3%. The team has consistently high performance, publishing an average of 10 papers each year including a recent increase to 18 papers in 2025, and the three REF return-eligible staff members contributed 5 papers to the most recent REF submission.

In addition, the HSSS has a strong performance for ECR development, with the School of Medicine's Working Group for Researcher Development being initiated and led by a researcher within this team. In 2023 and 2025, ECRs based within the HSSS have won prizes reflecting scientific excellence at both the UoN Sue Watson and ECR Gala events. More broadly, the department provides exceptional global impact by contributing to internationally accessed CPD training for hearing care professionals organised by professional associations and industry partners. Furthermore, publications from this team contribute to industry position papers, medico-legal cases, international podcasts, national regulations, magazine publications for hearing healthcare professionals, and community engagement events. Each of these contributions to public engagement promotes the reputation and visibility of the HSSS team and the University of Nottingham.

From this consistently successful performance, HSSS recruit an average of two PGR students per year, currently supervising three PhD students within the department and co-supervising a further two based in Nottingham. Students are funded via industry grants, EU grants, NIHR grants and the ESRC DTP. On top of contributions to PGR teaching, members of the HSSS team provide teaching to PGT and UG students in the School of Medicine, supporting these students to have access to highly specialised support from research leaders. Each year on average, the team supervises five Bachelor of Medical Sciences students for their third-year research project, worth 60 credits. They also contribute to 12 hours of in-person teaching at the Nottingham Medical School through lectures and skills seminars, co-organise the Hearing Sciences student day which is conducted in person to enable their PhD students to disseminate their work and get additional academic feedback, and act as interviewers for prospective undergraduate students. Staff also contribute to co-convening and marking exam scripts for the Hearing Healthcare module, totalling 20 hours of WLP allocation. Furthermore, the team contribute to marking in the MSc in Applied Psychology, totalling a further 10 hours of WLP allocation. Outside of academic contributions to education and student experience, team members provide personal tutoring support to 25 personal tutees on undergraduate and graduate medicine courses, and 5 personal tutees on psychology courses.

HSSS is not a typical part of UoN estates, as all rent and overhead costs are funded by grants. This includes the world-class £1.1m lab space development in 2013, which has led to research attaining international recognition within the field of hearing sciences. Being based in Glasgow results in additional benefits to the team through longstanding collaborations with five universities in the region, the Scottish Cochlear Implant Centre (servicing all of Scotland), and the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Audiology service. This enduring link with Audiology has enabled development of an extensive database of over 1,500 participants with known hearing profiles, enabling targeted and efficient recruitment for the specialist studies they conduct. This geographical location also facilitates engagement with Scotland-specific groups and thus promotes Nottingham's world-leading tinnitus research across the UK, not only through recruitment, but inclusion in policy (NHS Scotland guidelines & protocols) and charity-led tools (British Tinnitus Association toolkits).

The outcome of HSSS's well-established connections, high-quality research outputs, and knowledge exchange, has led to direct approaches by collaborators, including industry partners. These partners know the well-established reputation of the group (developed over 45 years), and regularly approach

this team directly to develop collaborative projects. In the past 12 months, four industry contacts contacted them to fund projects totalling £540k, with a further £200k grant awaiting decision. If the group's identity and membership were altered through relocation to Nottingham, the School of Medicine is at risk of losing significant sustainable research funding from industry partners (current HSSS industry funding >£1m).

As a result of the conditions described here, the business case proposal to focus hearing science activity in Nottingham by closing the Glasgow branch campus would not result in any material benefits for the University and is not in line with the desired outcomes of the Future Nottingham Business Case.

### *Summarising the impacts of the Business Case proposal and this proposed alternative*

#### **Relocation**

Relocation would affect 11 staff and 3 PhD students. This would have substantial cost implications, including decommissioning of the specialised Glasgow labs. The rental agreement for the space has a 12-month period of notice for withdrawal and risks penalty clauses being activated for early termination of the agreement. Recommissioning appropriate labs in Nottingham to ensure delivery of current grants is conservatively estimated at £1.6m based on applying an inflation calculation to the costs in 2013. Furthermore, many staff would be unable to take up such a relocation request, resulting in further redundancy/severance which may disproportionately affect those with disabilities/caring responsibilities.

#### **Retaining the HSSS**

By continuing to retain the HSSS in its current function, it is possible to achieve the aims set out for Future Nottingham. Retaining the HSSS allows the research team to continue to conduct world leading research in world leading labs, while remaining active members of the UoN and School of Medicine community. Costs relating to location are currently neutral, with grant funding covering rent and maintenance costs as well as a localised systems administrator. Grants also fully cover the salaries and overheads of nine team members, and partially cover the two remaining university-funded employees. Where it is proposed to reduce the Hearing Sciences headcount by two, this can be partially achieved from HSSS through one university-funded staff-member that has already applied for VR.

Not only does retaining the HSSS introduce minimal short-term costs, but it also supports sustainable income and reputational benefits to the University. It is the only option that provides the University with material benefits and alignment to the aims of Future Nottingham.

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining

staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of Life Sciences

### Summary of FN2 Proposal

“Proportional reduction of R&T roles to achieve the required 22:1 SSR to increase the margin generated by the School to a sustainable level and align with SSR targets”

### Alternative Proposal

Members in the School are in agreement with the proposed changes to SSR to support improved financial stability of the School. However, it is proposed that the scale of staff FTE and headcount change suggested in the Business Case is reviewed following the current admissions cycle.

The School is currently recruiting for the first cohort of students on BSc Biomedical Sciences which was initially expected to recruit 50 students per cohort and two additional staff members have recently been recruited to support the course. At present, the course has achieved recruitment of significantly more students for the first cohort to start in September 2026, with an anticipated cohort of 100 students, meeting the maximum capacity. The current plan for academic resource management relating to this new course is to distribute teaching, assessment and leadership workload across staff in the School. However with a likely double cohort size, this distribution needs reconsidering as part of resource management, and to proactively maintain staff wellbeing through reasonable and safe workloads.

This proposal recommends that a recalculation of the required staff numbers in School of Life Sciences is completed at closure of the current admissions cycle, to ensure that an accurate SSR is used when considering the planned reduction to staffing for the school, including approval of Voluntary Redundancy applications. To ensure the sustainability of this recalculation, it is necessary to consider that this not only reflects the larger than expected cohort size of the 2026 intake, but also future intakes in 2027 and beyond where comparably large and potentially growing cohorts could be forecast, so that adequate staff are available to support the preparation and delivery of this new course, maximising its success.

## Faculty of Science

### School of Biosciences

#### Overview

Biosciences is a strong generator of external research income:

- Approximately 10 FTE of staff time is currently bought out on research grants;
- The School generates grant income equivalent to £7.8–15.5 million/year, and staff costs are c. £11 million/year so nearly 100% of total staff costs;
- The School contains around 20% of Faculty of Science staff but generates around 30% of Faculty research margin;
- The School contributes around 5% of total University QR income, one of the highest in the Faculty of Science.

#### Summary of FN2 proposals

FN2 proposes:

- Reduction of academic staffing in indicative pools from 97.3 FTE to 55.2 FTE by 2029/30;
- Removal of 40.9 FTE overall;
- Reduction from 103 employees in pool to 56 employees in pool;
- Stated SSR increase from 10.1 to 17.5;
- Closure of an extensive list of courses: Plant Biology (BSc/MSci), Microbiology (BSc), Food Science and Nutrition (BSc), Agriculture (BSc), Agricultural Business Management (BSc), Animal Nutrition (MSc);
- Reorganisation into a Department within the new School of Environment and Biological Sciences.

#### Risks of FN2 proposals

##### ***1. Inability to deliver core operations***

The proposed reduction in FTEs (from 97.3 in pool to 55.2) can only be described as an advanced state of managed decline of a School that provides extensive research income to the University and is exceptionally highly regarded by UKRI and Industry.

The above proposed reduction represents the most serious restructuring in the history of the subject groupings within Biosciences and will lead to:

- Unmanaged staff exits focused on cost reduction rather than income growth;
- Instability to deliver core R&T activities, with remaining colleagues charged with an even greater burden of non-research and non-teaching activity;

- Extensive external damage, directly affecting student (UG/PGT/PGR) activity and research income capture;
- Damage to internal community wellbeing from excessive workloads under the FN2 proposals.

## ***2. SSR assumptions are unreliable and unrealistic for Biosciences***

The School is highly successful in respect to external income generation. This success in research has led to a high proportion of R&T colleagues counting towards staff numbers in SSR calculations, while in reality they are contributing no, or very little, teaching and learning activity. Because of this, the current SSR numbers are unrealistic in terms of workload on the remaining staff that are R&T and T&CL.

## ***3. Major risk to REF and grant income***

For REF, Biosciences and the vet school (SVMS) are jointly submitted under UoA6 Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences. In REF 2021, UoN ranked 3rd for Research Power within UoA6 and was thus one of the high performing units in the University.

For REF 2021 UoA6, QR income per year was £3.1m pa; equal to 8% of the total QR income for the University. As Biosciences contributed the greater proportion of both 4\* papers and REF Impact Case Studies, we estimate that Biosciences brought in around £2m pa, or approximately 5% of total University QR income.

Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE): The entire SPRE statement can be regarded as being of 'high risk' from FN2 as it likely impacts on the first three (of four) sections – strategy, people and investment – but less on the fourth section (engagement), and has a much bigger impact on Biosciences than SVMS. The value of SPRE from REF2021 was estimated at £3.7m.

Outputs: Many of what we believe will be 4\* papers for REF2029 come from the very strong Plant Sciences group within Biosciences, many of whom are now at risk of redundancy due to the likely closure of the BSc Plant Biology degree, plus the fact they no longer have any MSc courses to teach. Loss of such a large number of staff from the School will significantly reduce the number of outputs generated for future REF returns that can be considered for inclusion.

Impact Case Studies (ICSs): Many of the best Impact Case studies (ICS) that are likely to go forward for REF2029 come from the Food Science, Microbiology and Brewing groups, many of whom are at risk of redundancy due to the likely closure of the BSc Food Science & Nutrition and Microbiology degrees as well as the MSc in Brewing Science. Of the 14 ICS that are most likely to be submitted for UoA6, 7 are from Biosciences, 1 from Life Sciences (LS) and 6 from SVMS, with the Biosciences ICS tending to be internally scored slightly higher than those from LS and SVMS. In addition, there are 2 more ICS (relating to human vaccines or diagnostics) from Biosciences staff that could potentially be used for another UoA as they are considered unsuitable for UoA6. Four potentially 4\* ICS from Biosciences (given unit needs 7) can be considered as being at 'high risk' from FN2. Given the estimated value of a 4\* ICSs being £750K, this makes a total of £3m being at risk.

## ***4. Income and reputational loss of course closures***

The impacts of course suspension (and pending closure) has led to extensive negative external concern about the future of UoN's commitment to its core activities. In particular, industrial research funders have actively questioned the rationale for continuing to support research in the School of Biosciences, when the University will no longer be training the generation of applied scientists that industry requires. Moreover, the BBSRC, the main UKRI funder for SoB research, lists "Sustainable Agriculture and Food" and "Integrated Understanding of Health" as two of its three strategic challenges. At the same time, major competitors have made investments in the subject areas, gained considerable external coverage of their commitment to our core subjects and are reaping the rewards of a positive, rather than negative approach to change management.

## **Alternative proposals**

### ***1. Adjust SSR calculations to account for grant buyout***

The Faculty of Science FN2 proposal estimates a current SSR of 10.1. Assuming approximately 10 FTE buy-outs to research grants across the School, and a current total R&T/T&CL FTE count of 107, generates approximate student numbers within the SSR calculations of 1080. If the 10 FTEs on buyouts are removed, the more realistic SSR is 11.1. While this is lower than 17.5, the FN2 proposal, with extensive course closures, means that student numbers will be lower in the future, lowering the SSR further, which is counterproductive to the FN2 drive to increase SSRs. The recent increase in applications for unaffected degrees (see below) demonstrates the impact that greater resource in advertising, marketing and agent recruitment can achieve. A more positive approach would be to provide further resource to these activities (generated from mothballing buildings, redundancy savings and natural attrition over time) to grow student recruitment from retaining courses (Agriculture; Agricultural Business Management) / courses and pathways (Plant Biology; Microbiology) and expanding PGT, short course and CPD provision (Food and Nutrition).

### ***2. Recognise strong student intake forecast***

#### **Trend for increased undergraduate recruitment across the School.**

For 2026, applications for degrees unaffected by closures have mainly increased: Animal Science is up by 22% (288 to 350), Biotechnology is up by 28% (221 to 282), Nutrition is up by 28% (217 to 277), Nutrition & Dietetics is up by 18% (144 to 170), Environmental Science is steady (193 to 192), Environmental Biology is up 35% (46 to 62).

For 2026, firm acceptances for degrees unaffected by closures have also mainly increased: Animal Science is up by 49% (35 to 52), Biotechnology is up by 70% (27 to 46), Nutrition is up by 307% (15 to 61), Nutrition & Dietetics is down by 5% (41 to 39), Environmental Science is down 16% (43 to 36), Environmental Biology is up 8% (13 to 14).

#### **Strong PGT recruitment expected**

The number of accepted applications for each of our remaining courses are up: Biotechnology 24%, Food Production Management up 59%, Clinical Nutrition up 24% and Nutritional Sciences up 56% so recruitment for all MSc courses is buoyant this year. This is compared to an average of a 12% increase in applications across the Faculty, and a 4% reduction in applications across the University, showing that

Biosciences PGT degrees appear to be more attractive than others. Postgraduate international applications are particularly strong, with an increase of 75% for PGT international and 71% for PGR international students.

### ***2. Limit staff reductions to natural attrition***

Projections show that approximately 16–20 FTE (£1.33 to £2.0m in annual staff cost) reduction by 2030 is likely (assuming an average of 20–25 years on average in an academic post at UoN) through natural turnover, retirements and vacancy management should therefore be prioritised over redundancies. Compulsory redundancies should be avoided.

### ***3. Restore degrees while the new curriculum is being developed***

To avoid long-lasting reputational harm and needless loss of student income, restore the Agriculture, and Agricultural Business Management degrees with renewed focus; restore the existing Plant Biology course until a new Plant Biology pathway can be established; develop a new Microbiology pathway aligned to Biotechnology within Biosciences; invest in PGT, short course and CPD provision in Food and Nutritional Sciences.

### ***4. Support growth strategy instead of contraction***

The School has realistic growth pathways:

- Continued UG recruitment growth with renewed investment in advertising, marketing and external international agent activity (from savings in redundancy costs) to grow student numbers [(e.g. 25 international UG pa = 75 additional international UGs at steady state (£33k pa fees); + 20 additional international PGT pa (£33.8k pa fee)) = £2.5m + £0.66m = £3.16m], rather than manage the decline proposed in FN2;
- Additional international focus and partnerships (see below);
- Enhanced marketing from outstanding public engagement profile;
- Increasing grant income, in particular from industry, associated with the reversal of UoN's exit from key areas of core activity.
- Commercialisation of teaching directed towards the food & drink and agri-tech industries;
- Commercialisation of world class research facilities (see below).

### **Increasing internationalisation of degree programmes to increase recruitment**

We will establish new and strengthen existing opportunities for students at undergraduate and postgraduate level for international exchange with leading universities and research institutes in biosciences across Europe and beyond. This will include individual as well as group activities such as i) final year project and Master's theses projects carried out in collaboration with international partners including research stay abroad; ii) summer placements contributing to (e.g.) environmental and agricultural field research abroad; iii) new modules or additions/modifications to existing modules involving international field trips similar to the established and widely popular field excursions to Northern Sweden (arctic ecology) and Barcelona (air pollution); and iv) international summer schools on

selected sustainability topics. While we fully acknowledge that the positive effects of these on student numbers will not materialise overnight, we are convinced about their mid- to long-term benefits for student numbers. An internationalised teaching portfolio will provide students with a unique learning experience fully emerging into the global scale of sustainability issues, which are at the very heart of biosciences.

### **Commercialisation of unique world class facilities**

The School of Biosciences has an extensive portfolio of analytical equipment and a team of highly skilled technical staff to support this. This equipment supports research and teaching across the university but there is substantial capacity to develop this resource to generate external income. The Hounsfield and Elemental Analysis Facility (EAF) provide models that could be adopted more widely across the School/University. For example the EAF analyses samples for researchers and units (e.g. Chemistry Business Unit) across the Science and Engineering Faculties and SVMS, as well as supporting UoN grant and commercial income. It has an ever-growing portfolio of external customers in the UK and internationally. Income is currently c. £350k per annum derived entirely from word-of-mouth recommendations. The facility has substantial capacity for growth and further income generation with appropriate support e.g. advertising and marketing. Similar opportunities exist for the Food Sciences and Nutritional composition and digestibility lab facilities with projected income from industry via services rendered of c. £600k per annum. Commercialisation of our analytical facilities strongly aligns with the Food Systems Institute proposal to establish a Global Centre of Excellence in Food and Drink as part of the Future Nottingham Strategy.

However, to deliver on these, the University must retain its existing staff profile.

### **5. Non-staff savings**

Additional savings can be achieved through:

Mothballing of South Lab - £1,046,552 savings per annum (2189.44m<sup>2</sup> of useable space)

Estimated non-staff savings:

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Saving</b>
Estates consolidation: South Lab	£1,046,552

**Total estimated non-staff savings by 2029/30:** annually (£1.046m from building closure)

**Staff savings without redundancy**

**Estimated staff reduction from natural attrition by 2029/30:** 16–20 FTE by 2030

**Estimated annual saving:** £1.33 to £2.0 million annually

**Summary of financial improvement without redundancy**

Enhanced international student recruitment: £3.16m

Non-staff savings: £1.046m (from South Lab closure)

Staff saving from attrition: £1.33 to £2.0 million annually

**TOTAL FINANCIAL BENEFIT OF SoB UCU Proposal: £5.54–£6.21m per annum by 2029/2030**

**Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of Chemistry

### Relation of proposal to standalone submission from chemistry staff

This unit-level proposal for Chemistry is derived from financial modelling and proposals developed within a separate standalone submission by members of staff in the School of Chemistry. All financial assumptions and figures are consistent across both proposals.

This UCU proposal includes one key difference in wording compared to the standalone School document, relating to the identification of fractional FTE reductions in 2027/28:

*This proposal specifies that a total reduction of 1.0 FTE will be achieved through voluntary fractional contract reductions, to be sought across the entire academic staff body within the School.*

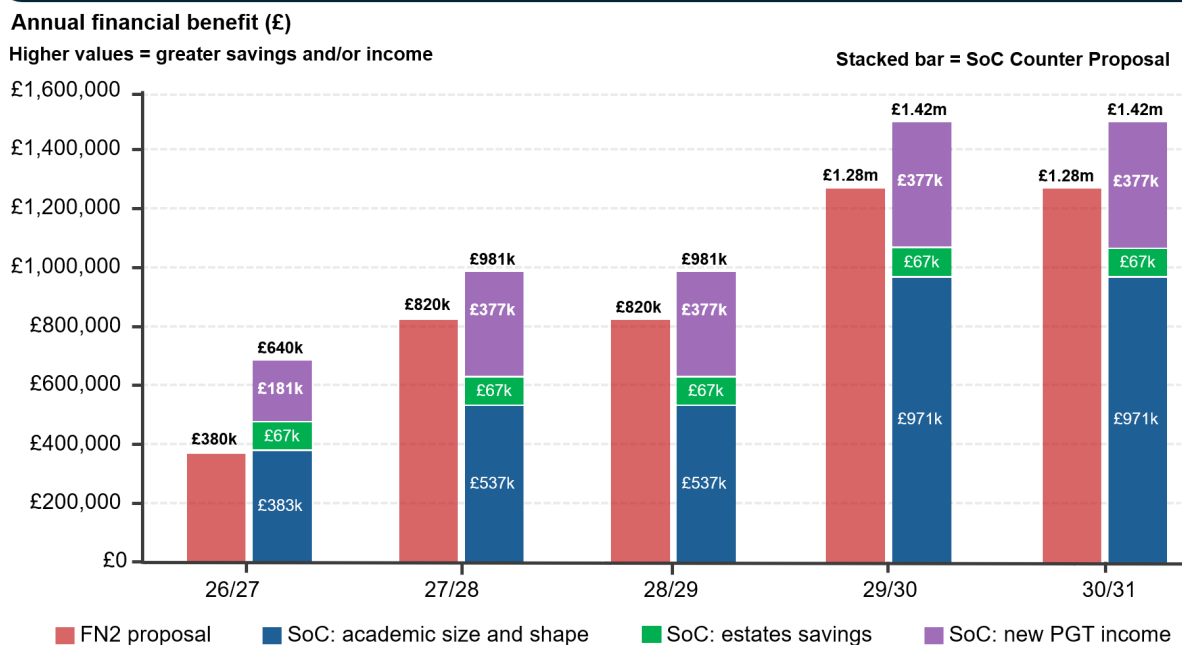
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### Executive summary

The SoC counter proposal delivers greater and earlier financial benefit (**Fig. 1**) than FN2: £0.64M from 2026/27 rising to £1.4M per year by 2029/30 compared with £1.3M under FN2. It also protects teaching delivery, research capacity, future income and UoN Chemistry's global reputation.

## Financial plan: SoC counter proposal (SoC) vs FN2

Financial plan will deliver immediate benefits: Savings, New Income and Financial Sustainability



**Fig. 1 Financial impact of the SoC counter proposal compared with FN2.** The stacked bar shows the total SoC counter proposal benefit. Details are provided in **Appendix 1**.

The proposal is built around three elements: (i) FTE savings from existing academic pools; (ii) immediate energy and operational savings from reducing Chemistry’s laboratory footprint; (iii) new tuition-fee income from the AI and Digital Chemistry PGT programme from 26/27.

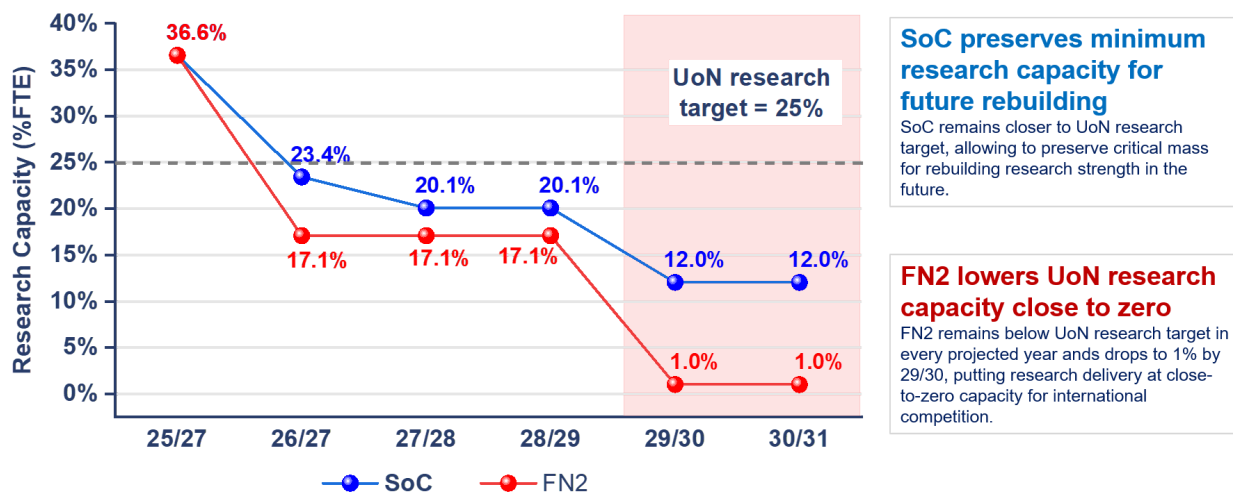
(i) Academic size and shape savings, reaching approximately £1.0M by 2029/30, are delivered through a balanced reduction of full and partial FTEs across job families. This protects nationally leading laboratory-based teaching, supports a proposed Centre of Excellence in Chemistry Education, and preserves the minimum viable research foundation needed for future recovery. FN2 reduces R&T research time to 1%; SoC counter proposal preserves 12%, although still below the 25% UoN target (**Fig. 2**). The SoC counter proposal minimises FN2 impact on SSR (**Fig. 3**).

(ii) Immediate estates-related savings are delivered by vacating and decommissioning Chemistry spaces in the North Wing of Building 28 and The Fort, removing the running costs of 36 fume hoods, large freezers and associated laboratory infrastructure. These are direct operational savings, with further upside if the released space is repurposed for commercial or alternative University use.

(iii) New PGT income is generated from the AI and Digital Chemistry programme from 2026/27, which already has 29 firm offers (approximately 80% international). To avoid over-optimistic projections, the SoC financial model in **Fig. 1** conservatively assumes only 10 students in year one, however, the UEB approved business case anticipates further intake growth in subsequent years, providing additional upside. Further upside is expected from business-case growth in future years and continued strong 2+2 recruitment from UNNC, which is not included in the income calculation, supported by UoN Chemistry’s consistent top-100 QS subject ranking.

## Impact on Research Capacity: SoC counter proposal (SoC) vs FN2

**SoC preserves the critical research mass, enabling rebuilding research power, FN2 substantially erodes research capacity**



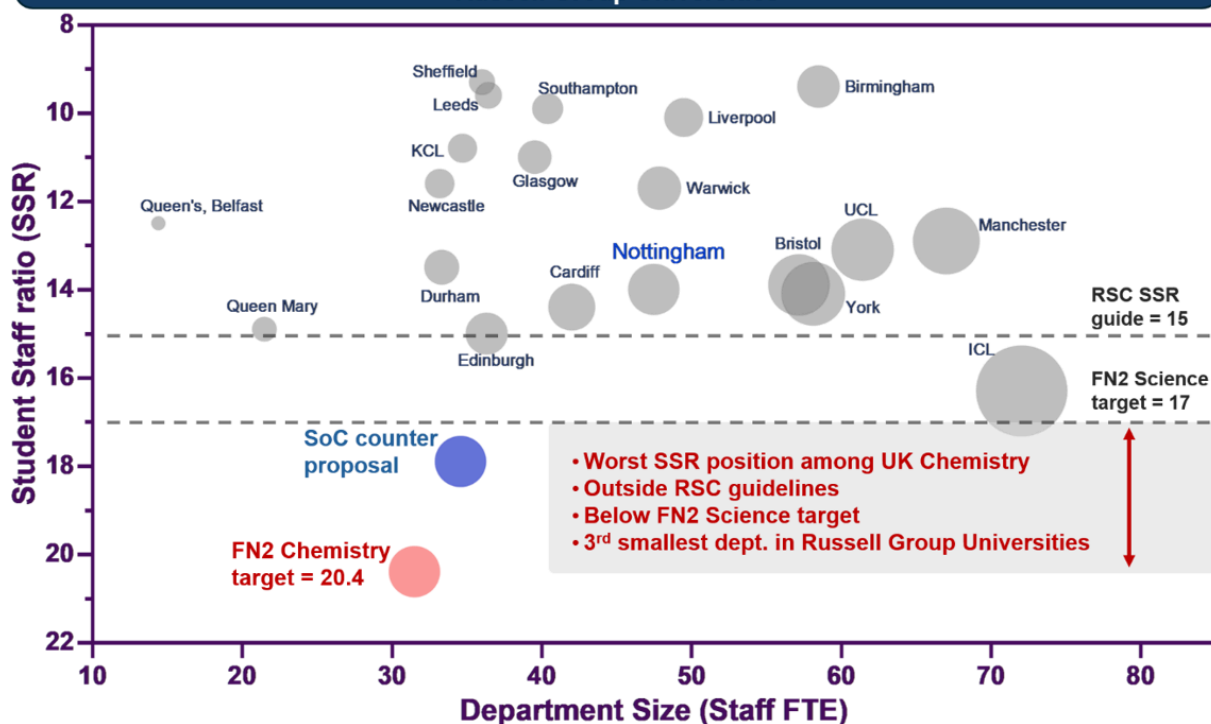
### FN2 puts all this at risk:

- Highest research income per FTE (£185k) in the Faculty of Science and third-highest at UoN;
- Top-ten nationally for research power in REF2021;
- Top-100 QS Chemistry ranking critical to international recruitment

**Fig. 2 Impact on research capacity under the SoC counter proposal versus FN2.** Research-dedicated FTE is calculated as the remaining staff FTE after accounting for the FTE required to deliver teaching and related administrative activity. Calculations are based on SoC data that is available upon request. Note: these data include 2.5 FTE mistakenly pooled with other Schools under FN2 but who are dedicated to teaching, admin and research delivery in Chemistry. *If these FTE are not returned to the SoC, the research capacity calculated for the SoC counter proposal would be reduced from 12% to 4% by 2029.*

## SSR across all Chemistry Depts. in Russell Group Universities

SoC reduces FN2 negative impact, but both scenarios leave Chemistry UoN below RSC guidelines. FN2 would position Chemistry UoN as one of the smallest three departments across Russell Group Universities



**Fig. 3 Impact of the SoC counter proposal and FN2 proposal on Chemistry SSR and department size, benchmarked against Russell Group Chemistry departments.** Blue bubble shows SoC counter proposal SSR, red bubble shows FN2 target SSR for Chemistry. Top dash line indicates RSC accreditation guidance for SSR in Chemistry, bottom dash line shows FN2 target SSR for Faculty of Science. The gap between FN2 SSR target for Science and for Chemistry (double arrow) highlights the disproportionate impact on Chemistry: FN2 pushes Chemistry substantially beyond the faculty-level target. Bubble size represents student numbers. This plot was generated from 2023/24 HESA data.

**Table 1** Key Programme Risks: FN2 vs SoC Counter Proposal

Risk Area	FN2 Risk	Counter Proposal Mitigation
<b>Net financial position</b>	Savings likely offset by significant loss of income (research, tuition, rankings)	Blended model combining estates savings, controlled FTE reduction, and new PGT income stream reduces overall financial exposure
<b>Research income &amp; capacity</b>	≥50% loss of research income (~£4M p.a.); research time falls to ~1%, severely limiting activity	Phased FTE reduction preserves ~10–12% research time, sustaining grant pipeline and limiting loss (~20%, ~£1.7M)
<b>REF performance &amp; block grant</b>	Loss of critical mass reduces block grant and undermines REF submission quality and ranking	Maintains minimum viable research base and disciplinary identity, enabling recovery of research power and funding

<b>Teaching delivery &amp; accreditation</b>	Loss of teaching leadership and technical coordination risks delivery of ~6000 lab hours, safety, and RSC accreditation	Retains T&CL-led teaching model and technical expertise, ensuring safe delivery and supporting CTP and Centre of Excellence
<b>Delivery of research programmes</b>	Extreme workload and loss of support reduce ability to deliver funded research and maintain partnerships	Role separation (T&CL teaching / R&T research) sustains delivery capacity despite higher workload pressures
<b>Reputation, rankings &amp; staff retention</b>	Decline in rankings (e.g. QS ~91 → significant drop), reputational damage, and loss of research staff to competitors	Maintains SSR closer to sector norms and preserves research base, supporting retention and gradual reputational recovery
<b>Research outputs &amp; future REF pipeline</b>	Reduced output quality/volume and inability to sustain REF pipeline due to halted research activity	Retains capacity for outputs and proposal development, though still constrained by wider FN2 context
<b>Curriculum Transformation delivery</b>	Loss of leadership risks failure to implement new programmes and loss of prior investment	Retains expertise to deliver CTP and support ongoing curriculum innovation
<b>Income diversification (PGT, partnerships)</b>	Limited capacity to sustain existing or develop new income streams	Enables delivery and growth of MSc AI programme, BPU activity, and external partnerships
<b>Outreach &amp; external income</b>	Loss of outreach capacity removes >£40k direct income plus wider recruitment benefits	Retains capability to deliver high-impact priority events and associated income/reputation

## Financial planning

### *26/27: proposed changes*

#### Academic size and shape

##### R&T L7: 3.11 FTE reduction (£383,155.11)

- 2.00 FTE retired by February and April 2026, with a further 0.10 FTE retiring in July 2026.
- 1.00 FTE will leave the School in September 2026, and a further 0.01 FTE contract will end in September 2026.

*Note:* Savings are calculated using the average R&T Level 7 total FTE cost of £123,201. This is a conservative estimate. The reduction includes the Head of School and other senior colleagues, so the actual saving is likely to be higher than the average FTE cost-based estimate. Full calculation details are available upon request.

#### Estates savings

##### Closure of North Wing B floor labs spaces by Oct 2026 and The Fort by March 2027 (£67,132.00)

The proposal removes 757.19 m<sup>2</sup> of Chemistry laboratory space from active use. Direct operational savings are estimated at £67,132.00 per year. This model includes only the estimated energy savings from high-intensity laboratory infrastructure, including fume hoods, freezers, chillers and bench hoods which are immediate and operationally cashable.

Using UoN estates costing, estimated by UoN of £629.90 per m<sup>2</sup>, this space would equate to approximately £478k of Chemistry estate cost.

### **New SoC revenue**

#### **Launch of the AI and Digital Chemistry PGT programme in Sept 2026 (£181,000.00)**

- The AI and Digital Chemistry PGT programme currently has 29 FTE accepted students, comprising 24 international students and 5 home students. Tuition fees are £30,800 for international students and £11,800 for home students.
- For the SoC counter proposal, a deliberately conservative income estimate has been used, based on the PGT business case approved by UEB.
- Rather than using the full 29 FTE currently accepted for 2026/27, the financial model assumes 10 FTE students in 2026/27, based on 7 international students and 3 home students. This produces estimated new annual PGT income of £232,000 in 2026/27. As Chemistry delivers 78% of the course, the income attributable to Chemistry is £181,000.00.
- Following the approved business case, recruitment is projected to increase in subsequent years to 13 international students and 7 home students, producing estimated annual PGT income of £483,000. As Chemistry delivers 78% of the course, the income attributable to Chemistry is £377,000.00.
- This income represents new revenue for SoC and is therefore shown separately from savings in the financial counter proposal.

#### ***27/28: proposed changes***

### **Academic size and shape**

#### **All academic staff: 1 FTE reduction (£84,757.00)**

This may be achieved through partial FTE reductions across multiple staff or other agreed mechanisms, while sustaining and enhancing teaching and research excellence.

*Note:* Savings are calculated using an indicative total FTE cost of £84,757.00 (average for L6) applying the same approach used for the R&T Level 7 calculation.

#### **R&T-R L5: 1 FTE reduction (£69,003.00)**

Reshaping research allocation

*Note:* Savings are calculated using a total FTE cost of £69,003.00 applying the same approach used for the R&T Level 7 calculation.

### **Estates savings**

*Beyond sustaining the savings and revenue already identified, an annual review will be conducted to assess whether further estate rationalisation savings are needed and feasible.*

### **New SoC revenue (£377,000.00)**

As described in 26/27 above, the recruitment is projected to increase in subsequent years to 13 international students and 7 home students in 27/28, producing estimated annual PGT income of

£483,000 (income for 26/27 was £181,000.00). As Chemistry delivers 78% of the course, the income attributable to Chemistry is £377,000.00.

### *28/29: proposed changes*

#### **Academic size and shape, estates savings and New SoC revenue**

*Beyond sustaining the savings and revenue already identified, an annual review will be conducted to assess whether further rationalisation savings are needed and feasible, and whether additional income opportunities can be identified.*

### *29/30: proposed changes*

#### **Academic size and shape**

##### R&T Staff attrition: 2.4 FTE reduction in Sept 2029 (£295,682.40)

*Note:* Savings are calculated using the average R&T Level 7 total FTE cost of £123,201.00. This is a conservative estimate. The forecast reduction likely includes senior colleagues, so the actual saving is likely to be higher than the average FTE cost-based estimate.

##### R&T-R L5: 2 FTE reduction in Sept 2029 (138,006.00)

Reallocation of analytical expertise to an Analytical Centre of Excellence.

*Note:* Savings are calculated using a total FTE cost of £69,003.00 applying the same approach used for the R&T Level 7 calculation.

#### **Estates savings and New SoC revenue**

*Beyond sustaining the savings and revenue already identified, an annual review will be conducted to assess whether further rationalisation savings are needed and feasible, and whether additional income opportunities can be identified.*

### *30/31: proposed changes*

#### **Academic size and shape, estates savings and New SoC revenue**

*Beyond sustaining the savings and revenue already identified, an annual review will be conducted to assess whether further rationalisation savings are needed and feasible, and whether additional income opportunities can be identified.*

#### **Excellence in Research**

The School of Chemistry (SoC) is a high-performing research unit, with the highest research income per FTE in the Faculty (£185k), a top-ten UK position for research power (REF2021), and a top-100 global QS ranking that directly supports international recruitment. The SoC counter proposal preserves a reduced but viable research base (~12% time by 2029/30 versus ~1% under FN2), maintaining the minimum capacity required to sustain outputs, partnerships, and grant pipelines.

Research activity is focused on three strategic priority areas aligned with UKRI missions: Energy, Environment and Sustainability; Health and Society; and the Quantum and Digital Future. These areas are already supported by strong grant portfolios, extensive industrial collaboration, and national infrastructure links (e.g. Diamond, Faraday Institution). Maintaining critical mass is essential to retain competitiveness and enable continued delivery of high-impact research and income generation.

The proposal includes a coordinated grant pipeline strategy targeting major funders (EPSRC, ERC, UKRI, Horizon Europe), supported by internal investment mechanisms such as the £4M Hobday bequest. This enables progression of early-career researchers and leadership of large collaborative bids. Crucially, it retains the ability to submit a coherent Chemistry REF return and avoid damage to future funding and ranking. Under FN2, the loss of research capacity would make this strategy unviable.

### Centre of Excellence for Chemistry Education

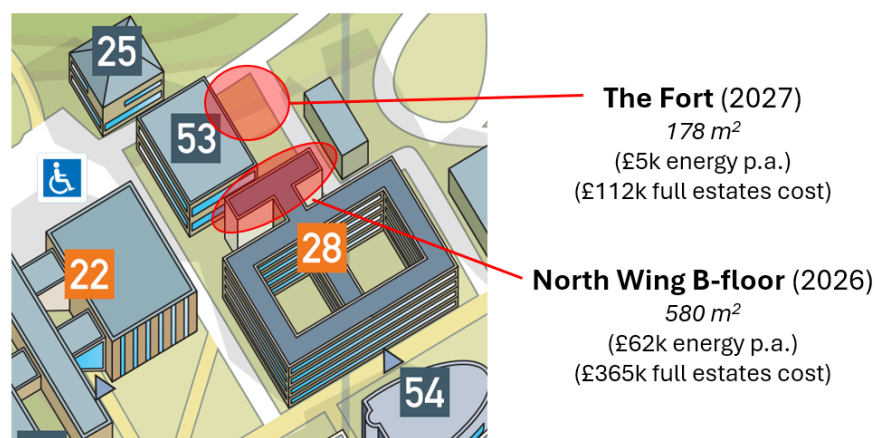
The SoC is an established leader in Chemistry education and is developing a Centre of Excellence for Chemistry Education, underpinned by award-winning teaching staff and the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP), launching in 2026/27. The counter proposal preserves the expertise required to deliver and sustain this transformation, whereas FN2 risks loss of capability and wasted institutional investment.

The CTP introduces redesigned modules, sustainability, and future-facing skills aligned with employer and societal needs, alongside integration of AI and digital tools. Delivery is based on a specialist teaching model led by T&CL staff, supported by technical teams and demonstrators, ensuring safe, high-quality laboratory teaching that meets RSC accreditation requirements (e.g. supervision ratios of ~12:1–15:1).

The Centre is built around four pillars: curriculum leadership, specialist delivery, sector influence, and efficient laboratory operation. It enhances student experience, recruitment, employability, and external reputation, while maintaining operational efficiency. The model also protects national leadership roles, sector collaborations, and multiple external recognitions (e.g. RSC and ACS awards), ensuring continued competitive advantage in teaching and outreach.

### Estates Usage (saving £67k p.a. by 2026/27)

The School of Chemistry currently occupies 10,677 sqm of office and laboratory space across two sites on University Park (building 28) and Jubilee campus (CNL). The proposal delivers £67k p.a. operational savings by 2026/27 through strategic reduction (~5%) of the Chemistry estate, including vacating North Wing (Building 28) and The Fort. This removes energy-intensive infrastructure (e.g. 36 fume hoods), providing immediate cashable savings while maintaining core activity through internal consolidation. The released space (~757 m<sup>2</sup>) also presents potential further value through repurposing or commercial use, although only guaranteed energy savings are included in the financial model.



**Fig. 4 Chemistry estate footprint proposed for vacating under the SoC counter proposal.** North Wing, Building 28, is proposed to be vacated by October 2026, with The Fort vacated by March 2027, supporting estates consolidation and operational savings.

## Health & Safety Case

The legal liability for Health and Safety rests with the head of business unit who must understand and mitigate risk. The proposal retains essential local specialist safety expertise required for compliance with legal (HSE), regulatory (e.g. COSHH, IRR17, GMO regulations), and professional standards. Chemistry operations require embedded, discipline-specific safety roles (e.g. Radiation Protection Supervisor, Biological Safety Officer), which cannot be effectively centralised without increased risk. FN2's model would remove critical expertise and threaten compliance, whereas this proposal maintains safe, legally compliant teaching and research environments.

## Centre of Excellence for Analytical Services

The SoC counter proposal actively **protects and strengthens analytical capability**, ensuring continued return on approximately **£21M of world-class instrumentation** (magnetic resonance, mass spectrometry, X-ray diffraction, thermal analysis, gas adsorption and trace elemental analysis) while enabling growth in research income, services activity and commercial partnerships. By retaining specialist staff expertise and dedicated research time, the proposal sustains a highly functional and competitive analytical platform supporting both internal research and external users across disciplines. This capability underpins grant competitiveness, enables high-quality services through the Business Partnership Unit, and positions the School to expand income from industrial and commercial collaborations. Maintaining continuity of expertise ensures these facilities remain operational, innovative, and income-generating, fully aligning with the University's ambitions to grow and diversify external revenue.

## New PGT programme: MSc in AI and Digital Chemistry programme

The MSc in AI and Digital Chemistry (launching 2026/27) provides a key new income stream and strategic growth area. While currently holding 29 acceptances (~80% international), the financial model conservatively assumes 10 students in year one, generating approximately £232k total income (£181k attributable to Chemistry). From year two onwards, intake is projected at 20 students, generating ~£483k total (£377k Chemistry share).

The programme aligns strongly with UK government priorities in AI and digital skills, and is supported by industrial demand and partnerships. It is led by a recognised expert (Prof. Jonathan Hirst), ensuring academic credibility and long-term sustainability. The course also enhances undergraduate provision through shared teaching modules, improving efficiency and recruitment appeal.

Overall, this programme provides both immediate and scalable income, supports interdisciplinary research and teaching, and strengthens SoC positioning in a high-growth global area.

## Outreach Activities

The SoC counter proposal safeguards a globally recognised and high-impact outreach portfolio that delivers both direct income (>£41k annually) and significant strategic value through recruitment, widening participation, international engagement, and reputation. By retaining the specialist staff capacity required to deliver these activities, the proposal ensures continuity of flagship initiatives such as Periodic Videos, international summer schools, Olympiad events, and schools engagement programmes. These activities represent a unique strength of SoC, combining income generation with demonstrable impact on student recruitment and institutional visibility. Preserving this capability enables the School to continue leveraging outreach as a powerful driver of growth, engagement, and long-term value to the University.

## People and Culture

The counter proposal preserves a strong, high-performing and supportive School culture, evidenced by consistently high staff survey scores ( $\geq 74\%$  positive in key areas), while addressing workload and wellbeing challenges through a more gradual and sustainable approach to workforce change. It mitigates risks identified in the Equality Impact Assessment, including fairness, legal exposure, and impacts on protected groups, and maintains alignment with Athena Swan commitments on representation, progression, and wellbeing. Importantly, the proposal avoids restructuring approaches that disproportionately affect clearly identifiable staff groups within specific job families or levels; for example, proposals to remove **100% of the T&CL L4 and L6 roles (1/1 and 5/5, respectively)** would make individuals in those pools fully identifiable, creating potential legal, ethical and reputational risks. Instead, the counter proposal supports a more balanced and equitable model based on phased change, natural attrition and role flexibility. This approach maintains cohesion, protects institutional knowledge, and reinforces a culture of mutual support and collaboration. Overall, it prevents destabilising workload increases, sustains morale and productivity, and offers a credible pathway to rebuild trust between staff and leadership while still delivering required financial savings.

## Open Letter of Support

Following publication of the Future Nottingham 2 (FN2) proposals, an open letter was issued (15 May 2026) calling for a reconsideration of proposed Chemistry staff reductions. The full letter is available here: [https://nottinghamchemistry.github.io/Open\\_Letter](https://nottinghamchemistry.github.io/Open_Letter)

As of 9 June 2026, the letter has been supported by a wide and highly relevant group of stakeholders, including Nobel Laureates, Fellows of the Royal Society, international academic leaders, industrial partners, external examiners, alumni, students and educators.

## School of Computer Science

### Overview

- The school of Computer Science was the top ranked School in the University for School Controllable Margin at 63.7%, compared to the target breakpoint of 40%. The School is further acknowledged as a “growth school that delivers strong financial benefit to the university” (from the [Faculty of Science Consultation Document](#)).
- The school has exhibited consistent growth in overall student numbers over the last five years. Computer Science is increasing its Undergraduate intake in September 2026 to a cap of 550, as well as launching a highly anticipated MSc in Cybersecurity for 2026/27, not currently included in that 550.
- The school is already functioning in the most resource- and person-efficient manner it can. There is no scope to reduce the resources of the school further, so it is recommended to prioritise student recruitment and external partnership opportunities to ensure capacity to support expected growth can be met with minimal additional disruption.
- The school has been advertising for two full time level 6 Associate Professor posts (closing date of 25th May), despite having relevant expertise and ability existing in CS who are unable to seek promotion. The primary difference in these 6R&T posts and 5R&T posts at risk are in school-level citizenship and leadership. This indicates that 5R&T roles are not redundant, and that it is *additional* skills required, rather than alternative skills. Existing colleagues could be provided with training to develop these additional skills, without the need to invest in further recruitment drives.
- Seven level 5 R&T were invited for informal ‘performance’ conversations with the Head of School in early May 2026 before at risk notices were sent out. We are concerned this, combined with the specificity of the 4.8FTE proposed reduction, indicates targeting of colleagues without due process or consideration of individual rights.

### Summary of FN2 proposals

FN2 proposes:

- A reduction of academic staff from 81.7 to 76.7FTE by 2029/30
- Removal of 4.8FTE overall
- Reduction from 84 employees to 79 employees
- Removal of 5 occupied roles
  - These 5 employees are identified from the current pool of R&T Level 5.
- An SSR, based on current student load, of 20.5:1 (this does NOT include the 50 additional students for the new Cybersecurity MSc).
- Reorganisation into a Department within the new School of Physical Sciences and Informatics.

### Risks of FN2 proposals

### **1. A SSR in Computer Science of over 25:1**

Computer Science firm accepts for 2026/27 UG intake are currently 45 home students and 23 international students higher (5% increase) than this phase of the 2025/26 intake cycle at 407 accepts. Firm accepts for PGT for 2026/27 are currently 38 students higher than this time in the 2025/26 cycle. Our current trajectory suggests that Computer Science will see around 1975 students for the 2026/27 academic year, creating a projected SSR of 24:1.

A 24:1 SSR is far beyond the number given in the consultation document of 20.5:1, and shows continuous growth as it also surpasses the 2024/25 SSR of 22.5:1 from Tableau data. 24:1 also exceeds the upper boundary of proposed SSR of 18:1-22:1. In the recent FN Operational SSR spreadsheet circulated via Sharepoint, our student numbers were given as 1575, creating a new SSR of 19:1. Tableau data shows 1746 students in Computer Science as per 27th May 2026 providing a current SSR of 21:1 before consideration of teaching buy out time, secondment, or other teaching exclusions.

If the proposed FTE reductions were to take place, **this would create a SSR of over 25:1.**

A SSR of over 25:1 is far beyond target ratios and creates a serious risk of:

- Operational instability
- Inability to maintain teaching delivery - Student NSS and NLES responses in CS show that students already find it extremely difficult to get adequate academic support due to the size of cohorts competing with staff availability.
- Damage to research continuity
- Risk to BCS re-accreditation
- Risk to Computer Science Athena Swan award (re-application in 2027).

The reduction in staff teaching capacity will also be compounded by the acknowledged declining PGR numbers. PGR numbers are decreasing for a range of geopolitical factors, but are also impacted in CS by the end of the Horizon CDT. Traditionally, PGR colleagues have provided invaluable research and teaching support across a range of roles from teaching assistant positions, to technical support for teaching provision, to assessment marking, to empirical research. Each module has a mix of staff and PGRs providing this support, with some examples of 50% or over being PGRs. This decrease in support will reflect in increased burden on academic staff, further inflating the academic workload particularly in teaching duties.

### **2. REF Risk**

The loss of 5 colleagues in Computer Science will have a substantial impact on REF contributions through a range of impacts including:

- Reduced research time
  - Less time for publishing high-quality research
  - Fewer grant applications
  - Less capacity for long-term or ambitious projects
- Lower research quality or volume

- Fewer publications
- Slower publication rates
- Lower-impact outputs
- Increased tension between teaching and research commitments
  - Less capacity for research
  - Less capacity for teaching
- Detrimental impact on case studies
- Negative effects on research impact beyond academia
  - Loss of time and resources to build external partnerships
  - Loss of time and resources to maintain external partnerships
  - Loss of capacity and opportunities for public engagement
  - Loss of opportunities for policy shaping
  - Loss of financial and resource support for industry partnerships
- Reduced research environment scores due to negative impact on
  - Research culture
  - Staff development
  - Support for early career researchers
  - Sustainability
- Risk to staff wellbeing in trying to meet REF deadlines
  - Overwork and burnout
  - Difficulty mentoring PhD students
  - Weak research support structures
  - Poor staff retention
- Recruitment and retention problems
  - Limited appeal to recruit top researchers
  - Loss of REF-active staff
  - Reduced ability to compete with research-intensive institutions

### ***3. Disproportionate loss of early and mid-career academics through targeting of R&T Lvl5***

In combination with the pause to promotions, the targeting of R&T level 5 staff risks eradication of exceptional talent that would contribute to both grant income and teaching reputation of the University in the short- and long-term.

This further creates significant risks to:

- grant capture,
- doctoral supervision,
- REF outputs,
- international collaborations,
- QR income.

The School is one of the University's strongest research income generators. Weakening it may reduce overall institutional income rather than improve sustainability.

#### ***4. Equality impact***

The current equality impact assessments are insufficient to assess the potential risk stemming from voluntary and/or compulsory redundancy. Of the 78 academic staff members in Computer Science listed on the UoN website, 59 are male and only 20 are female or other gender minorities.

Over half (n=12) of all female and minority gender academic colleagues in CS are in the redundancy pool. This statistic alone demonstrates discrimination in the pooling process.

Female members of staff are documented as taking on significantly higher levels of citizenship and pastoral roles, a factor that must be considered in future redundancy criteria.

Further to this, 5R&T is the entry-level grade for academics at the University of Nottingham. This creates additional concerns of discrimination based on age.

#### ***5. Damage to Computer Science's Athena Swan status***

The proposed changes raise real risks to the School's Athena Swan status, which is being re-evaluated in 2027. Impact on gender (and gender-related impacts), intersectionality, and at-risk groups must be properly evaluated to ensure that award criteria are met.

#### ***6. FN2-related attrition***

Based on the reputational damage of FN2 announcements and implementation (stemming from negative media coverage, social media, and within academic communities), it seems likely that the natural annual attrition rate (described below under Alternative Proposals) will accelerate as staff seek to leave the institution for better opportunities.

#### **Alternative proposals**

1. Savings will be made via the natural attrition rate of UoN CS staff base, which presently is between 3FTE and 4FTE annually (figures based on publicly available staff listings 2021-2026), thus leading to an anticipated overall 9-12FTE reduction over 3 years of FN2 across all academic job families.
2. Concentrate resources on student recruitment opportunities:
  - CS is opening a new Cybersecurity MSc course anticipated to bring in an additional 50 PGT students. Further courses in areas such as Responsible AI, Digital Futures, and Fintech have also been proposed and could be used to target specialised student recruitment.
  - CS is also launching a Level 4 AI and Automation apprenticeship scheme anticipated to further improve intake. Other apprenticeship schemes targeting areas such as AI literacy

could be established with existing school expertise to bolster government and industry partnerships, as well as student income.

- Invest in training and resource support for school-level recruitment drives.
  - Build on opportunities presented by the restructuring plan and creation of the College of Physical Sciences and Informatics to create cross-departmental course offerings that would appeal to a wider range of prospective students who may benefit from interdisciplinary training, targeting of skill gaps etc.
3. Invest in creating unique selling points for UoN CS:
    - Expand repertoire of external skills accreditation through the British Computing Society and 'Chartered' Institutes
  4. Support long-term project partnerships:
    - Local project partnerships with Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, East Midlands Hub
    - National project partnerships with Innovate UK, Alan Turing Institute, Wellcome Institute
  5. Ensure adequate risk assessment and re-evaluation of SSR calculations
    - Complete a Risk Assessment for impact on students and student intake in regards to SSR changes
    - Following confirmation of September intake. Specifically, account for apprenticeship commitment, contract type, teaching buy out, secondment, long-term absence, and training posts with reduced teaching workload
  6. Ensure adequate risk assessment and mitigation strategies to prevent discrimination
    - Delegate Equality Impact Assessment of compulsory redundancies to CS EDI committee
    - Allow SSR targets to be met through natural attrition of staff (estimated to reach target reduction of 4.8FTE within the 26/27 academic year), preventing disproportionate impact on early- and mid-career staff.
  7. Re-align universal qualitative, political, and 'social'/'corporate' value goals (such as reducing 'NEETS') to tangible, local, and institutional (UoN) capabilities
    - Research labs (MRL, Intelligent Modeling and analysis, Visualization etc), and special interest groups to inventory, communicate and align niche interests and capabilities with those of grassroots priorities.
  8. Provide training to 5R&T colleagues to close the 'gap' implied through the recruitment of new 6R&T colleagues, whose recruitment suggests that existing skills are not redundant.

## **School of Mathematical Sciences**

*UCU supports the counterproposal delivered by the School of Mathematical Sciences.*

### **Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of Pharmacy

### Overview

The School of Pharmacy is amongst the strongest research-performing units within the University, having been ranked 8th in the World and 4th in the UK for Pharmacy and Pharmacology in the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026, and was also ranked joint 4th in the UK in REF2021 for research quality and joint 1st for research environment, confirming the School at 100% 'world-leading'.

The School has celebrated its centenary this year which has highlighted the impact of 100 years of excellence in teaching and research, with alumni shaping healthcare, industry and policy in more than 80 countries.

The School's core activities are:

- Education and Student Experience (ESE): Delivering undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT), and postgraduate research (PGR) programmes.
- Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE): The School is recognised for world-leading impactful research, with a large portfolio of grants from a wide range of funding streams. The School's research activities span 5 distinct disciplines, which form the structure of the school: Advanced Materials and Healthcare Technologies, Biomolecular Science and Medicinal Chemistry, Molecular Therapeutics and Formulation, Pharmacy Practice and Policy and Regenerative Medicine and Cellular Therapies

The School has already delivered major savings. In the last two years it has removed 3 FTE and more than £250k from the pay bill, primarily through voluntary exits, contract endings and vacancy management.

The School of Pharmacy is also a strong generator of external research income:

- Approximately 4 FTE of staff time is currently bought out on research grants.
- The School contributes almost 5% of total University QR income.

Student recruitment indicators are improving strongly:

- Approval has been granted by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) to increase the number of students enrolled on the MPharm course to 250 from 2026/27 entry. Student recruitment indicators show this increased recruitment level will very likely be achieved.

The School is therefore not a declining or unsustainable unit. It is a high-performing research-intensive School with strong recruitment recovery and substantial future growth potential.

### Summary of FN2 proposals

FN2 proposes:

- Reduction of academic staffing from 61.5 FTE to 50.7 FTE by 2029/30.
- Removal of 10.8 FTE overall.
- Reduction from 65 employees to 54 employees.
- Removal of 11 occupied roles plus 5 vacant roles.
- Stated SSR increase from 13.7 to 16.6 (see below for concerns regarding this data)
- Merge with Pharmacology from the current School of Life Sciences into a new School of Pharmacy in the College of Health.

## Risks of FN2 proposals

### *1. Inability to deliver core operations*

The School has already reduced staffing by 3 FTE within two years, removing more than £250k annually from the pay bill. The proposed further reduction of 10.8 FTE therefore represents a second major restructuring on top of savings already delivered.

Even in isolation, reductions of this scale would place the School under severe operational strain. However, the position is made substantially worse by the failure to account properly for externally funded research buyout in the SSR calculations. This is particularly significant in a research-intensive School such as Pharmacy.

Approximately 4 FTE of academic time is currently funded through external research grants. These staff are contractually committed to delivering grant-funded research activity and cannot simultaneously absorb major increases in teaching workload.

Under the proposed restructuring:

- staffing would fall from 61.5 FTE to 50.7 FTE;
- applying the proposed 25% research allocation reduces available teaching capacity to approximately 38 FTE;
- subtracting externally funded research buyout reduces effective teaching capacity further to around 34 FTE.

Current teaching and teaching-related activity requires approximately 37 FTE.

This therefore leaves a deficit of almost 3 FTE against current operational requirements.

The consequences are likely to include:

- serious operational instability;
- inability to sustain teaching delivery at current levels;
- significant damage to research continuity and grant performance;
- unsustainable workload pressures and associated risks to staff wellbeing;

- unmanaged staff departures driven by an impossible working environment.

## ***2. SSR assumptions are unreliable and unrealistic for Pharmacy***

The FN2 business case states that the School currently operates at an SSR of 13.7. However, we have been unable to reproduce this figure using the data made available to staff. The Tableau data instead indicates a student load of approximately 924 students. Combined with the stated staffing level of 61.5 FTE, this corresponds to an SSR closer to 15.

Management has also acknowledged that:

- Pharmacy already operates at a higher SSR than comparable research-intensive universities;
- That plans are underway increase student numbers of the 4-year MPharm course, which have been approved by the GPhC, to 250 per year from 2026/27 entry. This increase has not been included in the current SSR calculations;
- Further increases carry significant risks to student experience and research performance;
- There is a material risk to GPhC reaccreditation during the 2029/30 review cycle.

The current proposals would substantially worsen this position. If implemented, Nottingham would likely become an extreme outlier among other research-intensive Universities, operating with by far the highest SSR among comparable Pharmacy departments with an SSR of 20 by 2029/30 once the increased MPharm intake has been accounted for.

This raises serious concerns regarding:

- the credibility of the workforce modelling underpinning FN2;
- the operational sustainability of the proposed staffing levels;
- the long-term viability and reputation of the School.

## **Alternative proposals**

### ***1. Adjust SSR calculations to account for grant buyout***

SSR calculations should discount externally funded staff time.

Without this adjustment:

- research-intensive Schools are unfairly penalised;
- grant success becomes financially disadvantageous;
- workload models become internally inconsistent.

If grant buyout is properly discounted:

- The school reaches SSR targets through planned growth and modest attrition alone;
- no extreme staffing reductions are required.

## ***2. Recognise anomalous student intake and improved forecast***

The already approved increase in student numbers enrolled on the four year MPharm course will increase student load by 120 which has not been considered in the FN2 proposals.

**Estimated annual increase in income from recruitment by 2029/30: £1.2m**

## ***3. Limit reductions to natural attrition***

School projections show that approximately 4-5 FTE reduction by 2030 is potentially manageable. Natural turnover, retirements and vacancy management should therefore be prioritised. Compulsory redundancies should be avoided.

## ***4. Support growth strategy instead of contraction***

The School has multiple realistic growth pathways:

- Malaysia 2+2 programme;
- additional international partnerships;
- Enhanced marketing from outstanding public engagement profile
- increasing grant income.

However, to deliver on these the University must retain its existing staff profile.

## ***5. Voluntary reduction of hours***

A recent survey of UCU members in Pharmacy indicated strong support for a voluntary reduction in hours scheme as an alternative to redundancies. 50% of respondents stated that they would be willing to reduce their hours to protect jobs and preserve the academic strength of the School, provided that any reduction in salary was accompanied by a genuine reduction in workload, distributed fairly across teaching, research and administrative responsibilities.

To illustrate the potential impact, a reduction of 20% hours by just 10% of staff would generate annual salary savings of approximately £141,000. If participation increased to 25% of staff, annual savings would rise to approximately £353,000. These figures demonstrate that even relatively modest participation rates, far below those indicated by the survey, could contribute significantly to financial savings while retaining expertise, maintaining research capacity and avoiding compulsory redundancies.

## ***Summary of financial improvement without redundancy***

Enhanced recruitment:	£1.2m
Staff saving from attrition:	£400k-£500k
Staff saving from reduced hours:	£141k-£353k

TOTAL : £1.7m–£2.1m per annum

**Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of Physics & Astronomy

### Overview

The School of Physics & Astronomy is one of the University's strongest research-performing units, ranked 7th in the UK in REF2021 and second only to Cambridge across the last three REF/RAE cycles for research quality.

This is emphatically demonstrated by the response to the [open letter](#) calling on management to reverse the cuts to the school. This has been signed by well over 1000 professional physicists from across the world, including **ten nobel laureates**, over sixty fellows of royal societies and many other prize winning academics. Prof Brian Cox - particle physicist and well known documentary maker - has also signed. It is notable from the comments that all of the research groups in the school are globally respected, from particles to astronomy, from condensed matter to medical physics.

The School has already delivered major savings. In the last two and a half years it has removed 19.6 FTE and more than £1.1m from the pay bill, primarily through voluntary exits, contract endings and vacancy management.

Physics is also one of the University's strongest generators of external research income:

- Approximately 19 FTE of staff time is currently bought out on research grants.
- The School generates grant income equivalent to roughly 150–200% of total staff costs.
- The School contains around 15% of Faculty of Science staff but generates around 30% of Faculty grant income.
- The School contributes around 5% of total University QR income.

Student recruitment indicators are improving strongly, with UG applications currently at a five year high. UCAS data demonstrates that Physics applications are up over 10% locally and 1% nationally, as alluded to in the FN2 business case. This is no surprise as Physics A level entries hit a century's high in 2025 according to a [report from the Institute of Physics](#), suggesting that this subject represents an area for genuine growth in teaching to go alongside its research excellence.

This opportunity for growth is reinforced by the fact that historically, Physics has been a missed opportunity for better marketing. Several of its academics contribute to Brady Haran's successful YouTube channels (Sixty Symbols - 889000 subscribers; Numberphile - 4.74m subscribers) and are recognisable figures, especially amongst the international student age scientist cohort. Collectively they have accrued well over 100m YouTube views and have authored a number of best selling popular science books.

The School is therefore not a declining or unsustainable unit. It is a high-performing research-intensive School with strong recruitment recovery and substantial future growth potential.

## FRS Letter to the Times

On May 29, the Times published the following letter signed by 14 Fellows of the Royal Society, including Lord Rees and Sir Peter Knight, criticising the planned cuts to Physics & Astronomy at Nottingham:

*Sir, The plan by University of Nottingham management to cut 28 per cent of academic and technical staff in its internationally respected School of Physics and Astronomy would, if carried out, represent an act of extraordinary intellectual vandalism and self-harm, one with consequences far beyond its campus. The proposal threatens irreparable harm, not only to the University of Nottingham's international standing, but more generally to the reputation of UK science for quality and stability, signalling that the national research base can be slashed by the stroke of an accountant's pen. The proposal disregards research excellence, and would weaken the UK pipeline of physicists, teachers and innovators, chilling research and the outside investment that catalyses it. Averaged over the last three evaluations, University of Nottingham physics is rated second only to the University of Cambridge in research quality by the UK's system for assessing the excellence of research in UK higher education (REF). This status and the £79.3m of income it has generated for the university since 2021 is earned by academics, not executives. Killing a goose that lays golden eggs is a short-sighted response to difficulties paying for goose feed.*

*Professor Jim Al-Khalili CBE FRS, University of Surrey  
Professor James Binney FRS, University of Oxford  
Professor Cathie Clarke FRS, University of Cambridge  
Professor Jo Dunkley OBE FRS, Princeton University  
Professor James Dunlop FRS, University of Edinburgh  
Professor John Ellis CBE FRS, King's College London  
Professor Richard Ellis CBE FRS, University College London  
Professor Carlos Frenk CBE FRS, Durham University  
Professor Edward Hinds FRS, Imperial College London  
Professor Sir Peter Knight FRS, Imperial College London  
Professor Mark Lancaster FRS, University of Manchester  
Professor Malcolm H. Levitt FRS, University of Southampton  
Professor John Peacock FRS, University of Edinburgh  
Professor Lord Martin Rees FRS, University of Cambridge*

## Summary of FN2 proposals

FN2 proposes:

- Reduction of academic staffing from 64.67 FTE to 46.67 FTE by 2029/30.
- Removal of 18 FTE overall.
- Reduction from 71 employees to 51 employees.
- Removal of 20 occupied roles plus 2 vacant roles.
- Stated SSR increase from 8.1 to 11.2 (see below for concerns regarding this data)
- Closure of Mathematical Physics MSci

- Reorganisation into a Department within the new School of Physical Sciences & Informatics.

## Risks of FN2 proposals

### *1. Inability to deliver core operations*

The School has already reduced staffing by 19.6 FTE within two years, removing more than £1.1m annually from the pay bill. The proposed further reduction of 18 FTE therefore represents a second major restructuring on top of savings already delivered.

Even in isolation, reductions of this scale would place the School under severe operational strain. However, the position is made substantially worse by the failure to account properly for externally funded research buyout in the SSR calculations. This is particularly significant in a research-intensive School such as Physics & Astronomy.

Approximately 19 FTE of R&T academic time is currently funded through external research grants. These staff are contractually committed to delivering grant-funded research activity and cannot simultaneously absorb major increases in teaching workload.

Under the proposed restructuring:

- staffing would fall from 64.67 FTE to 46.67 FTE;
- applying the proposed 25% research allocation reduces available teaching capacity to approximately 35 FTE;
- subtracting externally funded research buyout reduces effective teaching capacity further to around 16 FTE.

Current teaching and teaching-related activity requires approximately 31.8 FTE.

This therefore leaves a deficit of almost 16 FTE against current operational requirements. Note that this is almost certainly an overestimate given that 10.4 FTE of the original 64.67 are R only and do not have any teaching roles.

The consequences of this are likely to include:

- serious operational instability;
- inability to sustain teaching delivery at current levels;
- significant damage to research continuity and grant performance;
- unsustainable workload pressures and associated risks to staff wellbeing;
- unmanaged staff departures driven by an impossible working environment.

The Institute of Physics has communicated serious concerns that this could lead to failed accreditation if it goes through unchecked.

## ***2. SSR assumptions are unreliable and unrealistic for Physics***

The FN2 business case states that the School currently operates at an SSR of 8.1. However, we have been unable to reproduce this figure using the data made available to staff. The Tableau data instead indicates a student load of approximately 574 students. Combined with the stated staffing level of 64.67 FTE, this corresponds to an SSR closer to 8.9.

Management has also acknowledged that:

- Physics & Astronomy already operates at the fifth-highest SSR in the Russell Group;
- further increases carry significant risks to student experience and research performance;
- there is a material risk to Institute of Physics reaccreditation during the 2027 review cycle.

The current proposals would substantially worsen this position. If implemented, Nottingham would likely become an extreme outlier within the Russell Group, operating with by far the highest SSR among comparable Physics departments.

This raises serious concerns regarding:

- the credibility of the workforce modelling underpinning FN2;
- the operational sustainability of the proposed staffing levels;
- the long-term viability and reputation of the School.

## ***3. Major risk to REF and grant income***

The proposals disproportionately target senior research-active staff:

- 11 of the 18 FTE reductions come from Associate Professor and Professor grades.

This creates significant risks to:

- grant capture,
- doctoral supervision,
- REF outputs,
- international collaborations,
- QR income.

The School is one of the University's strongest research income generators. Weakening it may reduce overall institutional income rather than improve sustainability.

## ***4. Income and reputational loss of closure of Mathematical Physics MSci***

Feedback from offer holder days makes clear that the closure of the Mathematical Physics MSci is driving a negative attitude towards the corresponding BSc.

### **Alternative proposals**

#### ***1. Adjust SSR calculations to account for grant buyout***

SSR calculations should discount externally funded staff time.

Without this adjustment:

- research-intensive Schools are unfairly penalised;
- grant success becomes financially disadvantageous;
- workload models become internally inconsistent.

If grant buyout is properly discounted:

- The school reaches SSR targets through planned growth and modest attrition alone;
- no extreme staffing reductions are required.

#### ***2. Recognise anomalous student intake and improved forecast***

The School's weak Year 3 cohort is a temporary anomaly associated with the failed Digital Engagement rollout and prospectus issues during the 2023/24 recruitment cycle, rather than evidence of long-term structural decline.

This is clear from the current distribution of student load (Tableau data):

- Y1: 181.59
- Y2: 182.79
- Y3: 120.21
- Y4: 87.49
- Y5+: 2.33

The markedly lower Year 3 cohort reflects a single historically weak intake year that is currently propagating through the system. Once this cohort graduates out, and assuming recruitment stabilises at the level already seen in current Year 1 and Year 2 cohorts, a conservative steady-state distribution would be approximately:

- Y1: 183
- Y2: 183
- Y3: 183
- Y4: 89

- Y5+: 2

This corresponds to a stable student load of approximately 640 FTE.

Moreover, available recruitment indicators suggest that even this is likely to underestimate future growth potential. In particular, the above estimate does not account for:

- the new Ningbo 2+2 programme, expected to contribute approximately 60 students by 2029;
- Undergraduate applications at a five year high (Tableau - May 2026 snapshot);
- international Physics applications up by 86% (Tableau - May 2026 snapshot);
- University of Nottingham market share growing faster than the sector benchmark (UCAS - May 2026 snapshot);
- Physics A level entries reaching a century high in 2025.
- likely increased student interest associated with the Artemis lunar missions and wider space-sector visibility;
- the planned MSc in Quantum Technology.
- enhanced use of Sixty Symbols in marketing.

Taken together, these factors suggest that a student load closer to 720 FTE by the end of the decade is entirely plausible. This is an increase of 146 on the current load.

**Estimated annual increase in income from recruitment by 2029/30: £1.46m**

## ***2. Limit reductions to natural attrition***

School projections show that approximately 6-8 FTE reduction by 2030 is potentially manageable. Natural turnover, retirements and vacancy management should therefore be prioritised. Compulsory redundancies should be avoided.

## ***3. Restore Mathematical Physics MSci while developing new merged course***

To avoid long lasting reputational harm and needless loss of student income, restore the Mathematical Physics MSci alongside the BSc, while new joint Theoretical and Mathematical Physics course is in development. The latter should be due for rollout in 2028.

## ***4. Support growth strategy instead of contraction***

The School has multiple realistic growth pathways:

- continued UG recruitment growth;
- Quantum Technology MSc;
- Ningbo 2+2 programme;
- additional international partnerships;

- Enhanced marketing from outstanding public engagement profile
- increasing grant income.

However, to deliver on these the University must retain its existing staff profile.

### 5. *Voluntary reduction of hours*

A recent survey of UCU members in Physics & Astronomy indicated strong support for a voluntary reduction in hours scheme as an alternative to redundancies. 55% of respondents stated that they would be willing to reduce their hours to protect jobs and preserve the academic strength of the School, provided that any reduction in salary was accompanied by a genuine reduction in workload, distributed fairly across teaching, research and administrative responsibilities. A further 32% indicated that they would consider participating in such a scheme.

To illustrate the potential impact, a reduction of 20% hours by just 10% of staff would generate annual salary savings of approximately £146,000. If participation increased to 25% of staff, annual savings would rise to approximately £365,000. These figures demonstrate that even relatively modest participation rates, far below those indicated by the survey, could contribute significantly to financial savings while retaining expertise, maintaining research capacity and avoiding compulsory redundancies.

### 6. *Non-staff savings*

Additional savings can be achieved through:

- Mothballing Cripps North,
- Giving up 411.97 m<sup>2</sup> of lab and storage space in main physics building
- increased grant recovery.(eg by increasing requests for DI time as policy)

Estimated non-staff savings:

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Saving</b>
Estates consolidation: Cripps North	£288k
Estates consolidation: main physics	£197k
Increased grant recovery/buyout	£200k–£400k

**Total estimated non-staff savings by 2029/30: £685k–£885k annually**

**Staff savings without redundancy**

**Estimated staff reduction from natural attrition by 2029/30: 6–8 FTE by 2030**

**Estimated annual saving: £600k–£800k annually**

## Summary of financial improvement without redundancy

Enhanced recruitment:	£1.46m
Non-staffsavings:	£685k–£885
Staff saving from attrition:	£600k–£800k
Staff saving from reduced hours:	£146k–£365k
<b>TOTAL :</b>	<b>£2.9m–£3.5m per annum</b>

### Note on staff savings

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.



# Faculty of Social Science

## School of Business

### Overview

As noted in the [FN2 Faculty of Social Sciences consultation document](#), “Nottingham University Business School holds the prestigious “triple-crown” accreditation from AACSB, AMBA and EQUIS” (p41). However, we also hold other school level accreditations (Small Business Charter, PRME Champion, Athena Swan Bronze, Positive Impact Rating 2025 - Level 4).

Our teaching and learning portfolio includes five undergraduate degree courses, nineteen MSc (with four pathways), and Executive Education (five open courses and bespoke options available). Many of our degrees are professionally accredited (PwC, ACCA, CFA Institute, CIM, CIMA, CII, CIPFA, CIPD, CMI and Chartered Banker).

We are ranked in the QS Top 100 for MSc courses in Marketing, Business Analytics, Finance, Management, and Supply Chain Management. We are ranked 66<sup>th</sup> globally in the 2026 FT Masters in Finance ranking. Our MBA was in the Top 50 in Europe in the QS Global MBA Rankings 2026 and 16<sup>th</sup> in the world in the Corporate Knights Better World MBA ranking.

As acknowledged in the FN2 FoSS consultation document, ESE blends “academic excellence with real-world learning, delivered by expert academics and business practitioners. Its teaching emphasises interactive, research-informed learning, with strong links to business, opportunities for placements and a focus on digital, global and sustainable business skills.” (p41)

Our UK campus has 3359 registered students in 2025/26 (31.6% FoSS, 9.44% UoN). This comprises 2492 undergraduate students, 704 PGT students, 72 PGR students and 91 (No award). In terms of student satisfaction, the 2025 NSS results show a positive trend, with a mean score of 3.05 (+0.06 on 2024). The 2025 PTES mean score was 4.26 (+0.8 on 2024). As recognised in the FN2 FoSS consultation document, “the School is among the strongest in the University for graduate outcomes with over 90% of its graduates in high skilled work or further study.” (p42)

With respect to research, the consultation acknowledges “the school’s interdisciplinary research aimed at tackling major societal and economic challenges, with strong emphasis on collaboration with commercial, public and non-profit stakeholders. The Business School is fully integrated into the University’s research environment.” (p41). The school comprises six departments, six research centres, two school centres, three research groups and actively participates in university research institutes including The Rights Lab, Food Systems Institute and INFINITY. As noted in the FN2 FoSS consultation document.

**Importantly, as noted in the FN2 FoSS consultation document, the school “contributes the highest School controllable profit, and the highest net profit, of any area within the institution with £66m income in 2024/25.” (p42).**

### Summary of FN2 proposals

The FN2 FoSS consultation document proposes Nottingham University Business School will become the ‘Department of Business’ and sit within the ‘School of Business’ alongside the ‘Department of Economics’. The document states:

“The School continues to make a strong contribution to the University, a sustained decline in student numbers at postgraduate taught level, only partially offset by an increase in UG demand, has driven overall decline in the size of the School’s student population. At the same time, staff numbers have remained largely constant, resulting in a current SSR of 17.8. As the current SSR in NUBS is below the SSR that is required to deliver an average of 22:1 across the Faculty, FN2 presents an opportunity to realign resources in a way that supports the University’s ambition for sustainable academic excellence. Through the FN2 programme, we propose a strategic reconfiguration of the academic workforce to ensure long-term viability, whilst supporting high-quality teaching and research. This entails:

- Rightsizing the academic workforce to align with demand and SSR targets.
- Rebalancing staffing profiles to support high-demand areas and improve financial sustainability” (p42)

The school currently has a headcount of 180 academic colleagues. The proposal is for a reduction in headcount of fifty-three. In FTE terms the reduction is 25%, from 167.93 to 126.18 (-41.75 FTE). The proposed pools for CR are as follows:

- RT4-R/Nottingham University Business School – 3 roles in the pool, with a proposed reduction of 2 roles (1.5 FTE)
- RT5-A/Nottingham University Business School – 61 roles in the pool, with a proposed reduction of 6 roles (6.0 FTE)
- RT5-T/Nottingham University Business School – 20 roles in the pool, with a proposed reduction of 4 roles (2.72 FTE)
- RT6-A/Nottingham University Business School – 37 roles in the pool, with a proposed reduction of 9 roles (8.0 FTE)
- RT6-T/Nottingham University Business School – 13 roles in the pool, with a proposed reduction of 4 roles (3.8 FTE)
- RT7-A/Nottingham University Business School – 37 roles in the pool, with a proposed reduction of 20 roles (16.93 FTE)
- RT7-T/Nottingham University Business School – 14 roles in the pool, with a proposed reduction of 8 roles (2.8 FTE)

The FN2 proposals summarised above have been developed largely independently of colleagues within the school. The Dean of the Business School has been transparent about his decision to put all 180 R&T and T&CL colleagues at risk of redundancy and weight the potential pools for CR such that the proportion of colleagues at risk is greater for Level 7 > Level 6 > Level 5 as summarised above.

### **Alternative proposals**

The [People and Culture Strategy \(2023-2026\)](#) describes the University of Nottingham as follows: “We are a learning organisation and understand the importance of having a learning culture for our whole community, as individuals, teams and our university (p8). The strategy foregrounds the need to “reflect and learn, experiment, and be willing to “change track”. (p3), highlighting that “success will be dependent on “enabling people to speak up, listening to what they are saying and taking action.” (p3).

Four alternative proposals below are offered in the hope that it is not too late for this espoused commitment to organisational learning to be reflected in practice, by seriously considering “changing track” and avoiding compulsory redundancies.

#### ***Proposal 1: Include net profit as a consideration***

The FN2 FoSS consultation document notes Nottingham University Business School “contributes the highest School controllable profit, and the highest net profit, of any area within the institution with £66m income in 2024/25.”

Typically, profit centres are supported with resources, autonomy, and accountability for financial returns. Instead, FN2 is proposing devastating cuts which will diminish our ability to pursue our [vision, mission and strategic priorities](#) which are closely aligned with the UoN strategy. In pursuit of “sustainable academic excellence” profitability is clearly a more important consideration than SSR. Ironically, increasing SSR could affect student recruitment, as it is a key metric which affects QS rankings, which would negatively impact revenue and profitability. Moreover, increasing SSR will create operational challenges which will affect RKE and ESE, for example, jeopardising positive progress on NSS, PTES and degree outcomes. Student recruitment is also [influenced by academic/research reputation, which is often underappreciated by leaders](#). Dramatically reducing the number of level 7 staff in the school may appear at first glance to be cost saving, but it will directly harm both the number of students choosing Nottingham, as well as the price they are willing to pay (where this is variable). So, we propose, rather than relying principally on cost-cutting by increasing SSR (and reducing research time), profit per FTE should be considered, especially in the Business School.

***Proposal 2: Recalculate the current SSRs for schools, considering PGT and UG students’ study 180 and 120 credits respectively. Publish the results and assumptions underpinning the calculations for transparency.***

The calculation of the current SSR of 17.8 for Nottingham University Business School does not appear to consider postgraduate taught students' study 180 credits compared to 120 credits for undergraduate students. So, we propose recalculating the current SSRs for schools, taking this into account. In the interests of transparency, we suggest publishing the assumptions made which inform the revised calculations including up to date projections for student recruitment for at least 2026/27 and 2027/28.

*Proposal 3: Introduce an intermediate stage after VR where staff are invited to apply for a reduction in their contracted hours to reduce FTE*

### **Alternative proposal summary**

That University should introduce an intermediate stage after VR in which staff are invited to apply for a reduction in their contracted time. Although this proposal is focused on the Business School, we are aware of similar initiatives being proposed in other Schools and Departments across the University.

### **Context**

The FN2 Business Case envisages moving to a compulsory redundancy process if the voluntary redundancy stage does not result in the 'required' FTE reduction in a particular pool. This ignores an alternative possibility, namely that staff moving to a fractional contract may, in combination with VR, allow the required FTE reduction to be achieved.

This proposal is being submitted with the full support of Professor David Park, Dean of the Business School. Professor Park comments:

"I am delighted to see the levels of collegiality demonstrated by staff across the Business School who have stated their support for reducing their hours, subject to business need, as outlined in this alternative proposal.

I strongly support the request to explore this option post VR and once student numbers for 26/27 are known. There is a chance that it could remove the need for a compulsory redundancy phase in our School (noting the various caveats clearly outlined in the proposal)."

### **Advantages of fractional contracts**

The use of fractional contracts (FCs) has a number of advantages over compulsory redundancies (CRs) as a means of reducing staff FTE. For example:

- ❖ Using FCs leads to significant savings from avoiding CR payouts.
- ❖ In contrast to CR, using FCs avoids the loss of institutional knowledge and experience of academic staff. This experience is likely to be particularly important over the next few years given the level and rate of change that is anticipated.
- ❖ FCs are likely to be most attractive to staff towards the end of their careers and, as such, are likely to lead to relatively large salary and CR payout savings.

- ❖ FCs provide more flexibility over staff capacity. For example, the Business School envisages student numbers increasing significantly in 27/28 and beyond. If this proves to be the case, it will be much easier to move people on fractional contracts back to their original status rather than recruiting new staff. This will also avoid the substantial financial and time costs of recruiting new staff.
- ❖ The CR process is likely to lead to high non-financial costs such as loss of goodwill, and low morale. If the CR process can be avoided within the School, these non-financial costs will no longer be incurred.

### **Challenges of fractional contracts**

For some staff, moving to a FC will be done by means of flexible retirement which is permanent. For other staff, particularly those at an earlier career stage, moving to a FC will be much more attractive if the arrangement is temporary with a guarantee of the possibility of moving back to their original contract after a fixed period of time. The University's current flexible working policy allows for the possibility of temporary arrangements but only in particular circumstances.

To maximise the uptake of FCs avoid the University should facilitate temporary arrangements where these are required. For example, the arrangement could be for an initial 3-year period but shorter or longer if both parties agree. The risks from such a strategy are low in the Business School. If numbers grow as planned, then the required staff FTE is likely to be higher from 27/28 onwards than that listed in the Consultation Document allowing staff to move back to their original contracts after 3 years if desired. However, if numbers do not grow as expected, the 3-year period would allow for further reductions in FTE by means of natural attrition.

### **Supporting data**

The Business School has carried out an indicative survey of all academic staff to establish the potential level of interest in moving to fractional contracts. Staff were asked what fractional contract they would consider as a means of avoiding CRs under 2 scenarios: *a* no guarantee of a return to their original contract and *b* a temporary arrangement with the option of moving back after 3 years.

The responses are summarised in Table 1 by job family and level.

A large proportion of staff who responded (83%) indicate they are willing to consider a fractional contract if CR is to be avoided. Across the School, the survey indicates an FTE reduction of at least 13.9 is possible under scenario *a* and 17.15 under scenario *b*.

If we exclude those who responded "maybe" rather than "yes" to the question asking if they would be willing to reduce hours, the indicative FTE reduction is at least 11.6 under scenario *a* and 14.5 under scenario *b*.

Staff across all job families and levels have indicated they would consider a reduction in hours, but the strongest response comes from L7s. This is notable given that time reductions in this group would give

the highest cost savings and also that the FoSS Consultation document envisages FTE reductions in the School being concentrated amongst L7s.

The survey suggests potential staff reductions are possible across all Departments within the School. This will help in terms of matching potential reductions with teaching requirements.

Staff had a very short window in which to respond so there are likely to be other members of staff who would be willing to consider fractional contracts. A more formal request from the School or HR is likely to reveal additional potential reductions in staff time. Further, where staff listed a range for the fractional contract they would be willing to consider, we have used the upper limit of the range.

For both these reasons, these estimates should be seen as a conservative estimate of the potential reduction in staff FTE that could be achieved through fractional contracts.

The FN2 FoSS Consultation Document indicates that, based on current student number projections, a reduction of 25 FTE for the Business School is 'required' for 26/27 and a further 18.2 FTE in 27/8.

The latest School projections of student numbers and indicative VR approaches suggest that the 'required' reduction for 26/27 is likely to be much lower, possibly under 10 FTE. Further, projected numbers in 27/28 may require the 26/27 reductions to be reversed. That School projections for increasing undergraduate numbers are realistic is backed up by recent Ofqual data reporting significant increases in A-level entries for economics and business studies in 2026. Specifically:

- Economics: 46,365, 10.7% increase on 2025.
- Business Studies: 43,395, 3.5% increase on 2025.

*Source: [A-level entries by subject, summer 2026, Ofqual/Gov.UK 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026](#)*

Depending on the VR situation and depending on the actual student number outcome, it seems likely that fractional contracts could achieve most if not all the 'required' FTE reductions for 26/27 at least. Given the potential increase in student numbers from 27/28 on, the flexibility given by fractional contracts is likely to be a considerable advantage.

### **The proposal**

A Fractional Contract (FC) stage is introduced into the FN2 process immediately after the completion of the current VR stage.

In the FC stage, staff in the Business School would formally be asked if they wish to be considered for a reduction in their contract time with the option that the reduction is either permanent or for a fixed period of time, e.g. 3 years. With the latter option, the default would be that the colleague returns to their original contract after that period of time unless both parties agree otherwise. Colleagues could return to their original contract at an earlier stage if both parties agree.

Staff would be asked to confirm any contract reduction only after being informed whether the CR stage has been abandoned or deferred. Of course, UCU rejects CR unequivocally.

The timing and level of any agreed reductions in time would be agreed taking into account the preferences of the member of staff and the operational needs of the School.

### Equality considerations

Given that part-time roles tend to be held disproportionately by women, carers and disabled staff, any move toward fractional contracts should carry an Equality Impact Assessment, disaggregated by protected characteristic. The approach should confirm that any transition is genuinely voluntary, and that pay progression, pro-rata benefits, job security and committee representation are protected rather than eroded.

**Table 1: Business School staff Indicative willingness to move to a fractional contract if CR was thereby avoided: by job family & level**

	Total staff FTE	# staff responding	# staff willing to reduce hours	Indicated FTE reduction scenario <i>a</i>	Indicated FTE reduction scenario <i>b</i>
L4 R	2	*	*	*	*
L4 T&CL	2	*	*	*	*
L5 R&T	59.8	17	16	3.4	4.6
L5 T&CL	17.7	8	6	1.05	1.4
L6 R&T	36.8	13	11	2.15	2.8
L6 T&CL	11.2	9	9	1.7	2.05
L7 R&T	33.9	25	19	5.5	6.1
L7 T&CL	5.1	*	*	*	*
<b>Total: all</b>	<b>167.9</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>17.15</b>
<b>Total: exc maybe's</b>	<b>167.9</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>14.5</b>

#### Notes:

- (i) Scenario *a* is if there is no guarantee of returning to the original contracted hours. Scenario *b* is if there is the option of the reduction being temporary.
- (ii) Total staff FTEs are as listed in the FN2 FoSS Consultation Document.
- (iii) Where staff indicated a range for the fractional contract they would be willing to accept, we have used the upper bound of the range.
- (iv) Staff who indicated they had already applied for VR are excluded from the survey.
- (v) \* indicates numbers not reported to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

### ***Proposal 4: Increase revenue and SSR through PGT student recruitment as well as undergraduate recruitment***

The FN2 proposal notes “Whilst the School continues to make a strong contribution to the University, a sustained decline in student numbers at postgraduate taught level, only partially offset by an increase in UG demand, has driven overall decline in the size of the School’s student population. At the same time, staff numbers have remained largely constant, resulting in a current SSR of 17.8.” (p42). We have some observations about this:

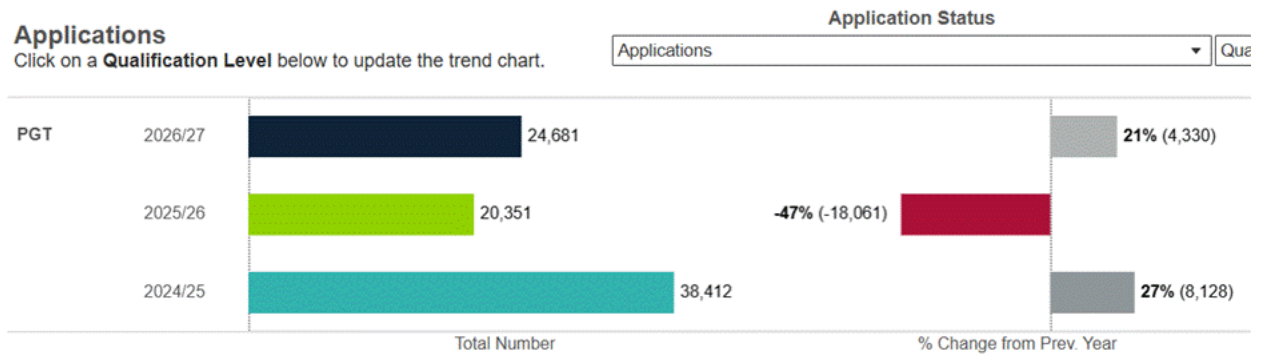
**The decline in PGT students numbers registered is a trend across the UoN and FoSS**

The [student population tracker on Tableau](#) highlights how PGT student numbers for UoN dropped 28% from 5690 (2023/24) to 4122 (2025/26). PGT student numbers in the FoSS have also dropped 33%, from 2992 (2023/24) to 1997 (2025/26) whilst the Business School has dropped 40%, 1173 (2023/24) to 704 (2025/26). Nonetheless, the Business School still accounted for 35% of all PGT students in the FoSS in 2025/26 and 17% of all UoN PGT registrations.

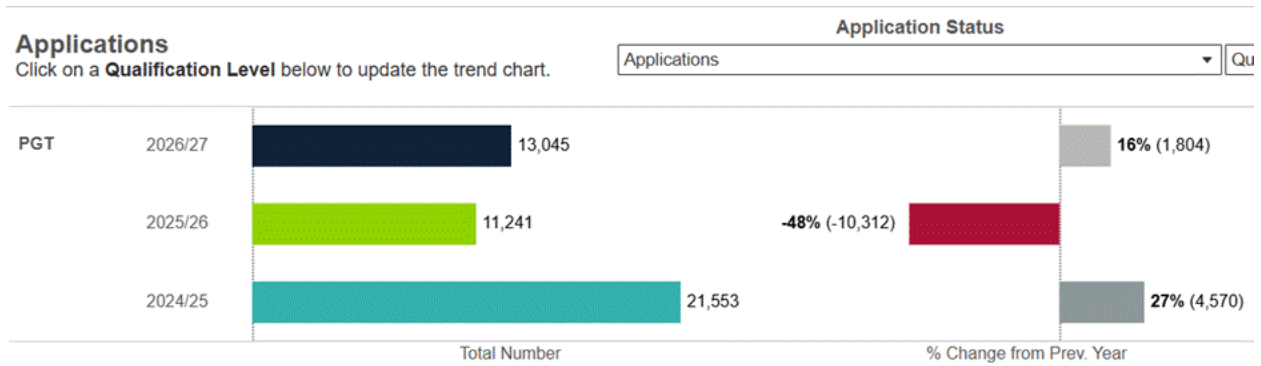
**PGT applications are up compared with last year, broadly in line with the FoSS**

With respect to applications, comparison for 6<sup>th</sup> June in 2024, 2025 and 2026 [on Tableau](#) for the Business School, FoSS, and University of Nottingham. This can be seen below (Figures 1 to 3) which shows applications are down for the Business School (-41%), FoSS (-39%) and UoN (-36%) over the past 2 years. The Business School’s applications are up (+15%) compared to last year, which tracks the FoSS (+16%) with both below the UoN (21%).

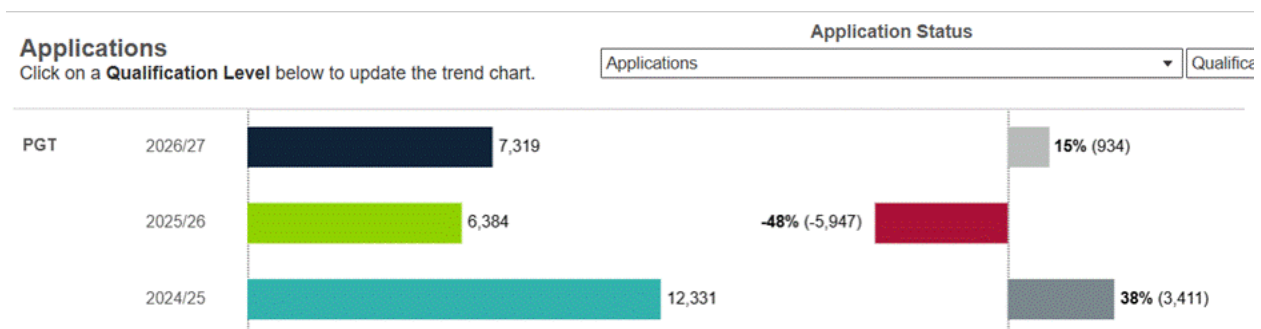
**Figure 1: University of Nottingham PGT applications (6<sup>th</sup> June snapshot, last 3 years)**



**Figure 2: FoSS PGT applications (6<sup>th</sup> June 2026 snapshot, last 3 years)**



**Figure 3: Nottingham University Business School PGT applications (6<sup>th</sup> June snapshot, last 3 years)**



The Tableau daily report on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2026 reveals 450 deposits paid (444 MSc, 6 MBA) (accept/enrol conversion 80% MSc, 88% MBA). This is down on last year but there is a compelling case to suggest we will recruit more undergraduate students than previous years, based on growth for the past three years (see below) and current recruitment data for 2026/27.

**Business School undergraduate student numbers have increased over the past 3 years at a rate which exceeds the UoN and FoSS.**

- ❖ UoN undergraduate students have increased by only 736 (27,540 to 28,276) between 2023/24 and 2025/26. This is an overall increase of 2.7%.
- ❖ FoSS undergraduate students have increased by 1280 (6685 to 7965) between 2024/24 and 2025/26. This is a 19.2% increase.
- ❖ Business School undergraduate students have increased by 406 (2086 to 2492) between 2023/24 and 2025/26. This is a 19.4% increase. The 406 students also account for 32% of the increase in undergraduate student numbers in the FoSS over the past 2 years.
- ❖ As highlighted by the Dean of the Business School, Professor David Park, during the [meeting of 3rd June 2026](#) there has been a massive increase in undergraduate applications this year and therefore good reasons to be very optimistic in growth, including a projected first year intake of 1200 undergraduate students in 2026/27 and 1300 (2027/28). Combined with alternative proposals in this document, this should help mitigate CR entirely

## **The University of Nottingham recruitment strategy has pivoted towards undergraduate international recruitment, which is a missed opportunity as a direct Russell Group competitor is recruiting PGT students successfully**

A strategic decision has been made by the university to pivot towards undergraduate international recruitment. During the Business School [meeting of 3rd June 2026](#) the projected PGT numbers for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were unchanged at 350 students. A direct Russell Group competitor, in the north-west of England, is projected to recruit over four times the number of MSc students in 2026/27 (assuming Nottingham University Business School registers ~400 MSc students based on current tableau data). The University of Nottingham was 97 in the 2026 QS rankings (and maintained this in the 2027 QS) with the competitor ranked marginally higher. So, the decline in PGT student recruitment alluded to in the FN2 social sciences consultation document cannot be attributed to challenging market conditions. Rather than focusing on cost cutting through headcount/FTE reductions in response to a decline in PGT student numbers, we should be looking to enhance PGT recruitment by addressing the root cause – our recruitment activities are simply not effective enough. So, we propose two interventions in the short and medium term:

### 4.1. Introduce *academic excellence* scholarships of *at least 25% of the tuition fee* to boost PGT conversion for 2026/27

Russell Group competitors including [Leeds](#) and [Birmingham](#) recognise and reward high academic achievement for students applying to study a PGT courses through high value scholarships. In the short term, to boost conversion of PGT applicants for 2026/27, we propose introducing at least a 25% scholarship for Business School PGT students with > 70% average (or international equivalent) for their undergraduate studies or a merit (if the applicant already has a postgraduate degree such as an MSc). This would require viewing scholarships as a necessary lever for student recruitment, which direct competitors are using more effectively than we are. Previous similar interventions in 2015/16 with respect to scholarship offers for academic excellence have shown this could help us drive PGT conversion. There are other potential benefits for ESE of focusing on strong students including effects on student outcomes (proportion of students graduating with ‘good degrees’) and reputation/rankings as advocates for us as alumni.

### 4.2. Empower colleagues in the school to lead ‘root and branch’ changes to PGT recruitment

Over the past few years, recruitment strategy and activity has been increasingly centralised. This has limited the autonomy of colleagues in the Business School to enact changes needed to enhance PGT student numbers. In the spirit of inclusive leadership alluded to in the People and Culture strategy (2023-2026) which advocates “a culture of trust and empowerment”, we propose empowering leaders in the Business School to act as budget holders to work closely with colleagues in external relations, CELE, admissions and so forth, to enact any changes needed with respect to recruitment strategy, governance, target markets, entry tariffs including English language requirements for international students, fees,

scholarship offers, digital marketing campaigns (Tik Tok, Instagram, WeChat, etc), student advocacy via social media, webpages, brochure, partnerships with providers like Kaplan, MoUs with other universities, provision of pre-sessional/in-sessional English language courses, programme of international visits (including academics) to recruitment fairs, partner institutions, agents in target markets and so on.

There is a precedent for empowering Business School colleagues to arrest a decline in PGT student numbers. In 2014/15, Nottingham University Business School had 260 students on our MSc programme. At the time, the fatalistic narrative was similar, the market was challenging and increasing recruitment was going to be difficult. With admittedly more autonomy than colleagues enjoy now with respect to recruitment strategy and budgets, colleagues worked collaboratively to grow MSc student numbers in a brief period to 414 students (2015/16), 504 (2016/17) and 958 (2017/18).

We are not suggesting the market conditions are identical now nor is this meant as a criticism of colleagues who have been working hard on PGT recruitment under difficult conditions when resources have been cut in the context of FN1. However, direct competitors are showing us it is possible to recruit PGT students successfully. Increasing PGT student recruitment from ~400 students in 2026/27 (an estimate based on 450 deposits paid: 444 MSc, 6 MBA with accept/enrol conversion 80% MSc, 88% MBA) to 550 students in 2027/28 and 700 PGT students by 2028/29 should be possible.

**Even assuming the current school FTE of 167.9 remained constant through to 2028/29 (no redundancies whatsoever) and assuming no change in how SSR is calculated (e.g., to reflect PGT students study 180 credits rather than 120 for undergraduate students), recruiting 300 additional PGT students on top of the projected increases in UG recruitment shared during the [meeting of 3rd June 2026](#) would increase the school SSR to 25 (2027/28). This is well above the target of 23.8 for 2027/28. Moreover, the SRR would increase to 25.9 (2028/29). Given the majority of PGT students are likely to be international students, assuming ~ £25,000 per student, 300 students equate to £7.5 million in additional income.**

#### **Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of Economics

### Overview

The School of Economics is one of the leading centres for the study of economics and econometrics in the UK. The School's research expertise spans behavioural and experimental economics, international trade, development, macroeconomics, public economics and political economy, supported by renowned, long-standing research centres.

The School of Economics research excellence is reflected in its strong performance in key research metrics: the School is ranked 96<sup>th</sup> in the QS Subject Ranking for Economics and Econometrics, 5<sup>th</sup> for Economics and Econometrics in REF2021, and 7<sup>th</sup> in the Russell Group (RG) for income per FTE. In the ESE domain, the School has an high SSR (22.4), recruits strongly on high tariffs programmes, and is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the RG for NSS in Economics, 9<sup>th</sup> in the Times League Table, 8<sup>th</sup> in the Complete University Guide and 14<sup>th</sup> in the RG by the Guardian League Table.

The job market for academic economists is very competitive and the turnover of staff in the school of Economics is sustained: 14.0 FTE of academic staff left the School in the last 5 years, including 4 professors. None of these exits was through retirements.

### Summary of FN2 proposals

#### FN2 proposes:

- Reprofilling away from L7 staff towards L5 staff
- Reduction of 5.0 FTE of Level 7 staff, with 3.0 expected departures in 26/27, 1.0 additional departure in 27/28 and 1.0 additional departure in 28/29 (Table 3).
- Creation of 5.0 FTE positions: 4.0 FTE Level 5 (research and teaching) and 1.0 Level 5 (teaching focussed)

### Risks of FN2 proposals

The proposed approach to reprofilling via redundancies in a research-intensive school operating in a highly competitive environment carries a very high risk of reputational damage and loss of highly sought staff.

### Alternative proposals

The School had already planned reprofilling of its staff without any need for redundancies. Therefore, we propose the rebalancing and associated saving to be entirely achieved via natural attrition.

## School of Geography

### Overview

The School of Geography is a world leading department of geographical scholarship with internationally recognised expertise in research, teaching and civic engagement. Ranked in the top 100 worldwide by subject for the 2026 QS World University Rankings and the top 20 in the UK by subject for the 2026 Complete University Guide, the school delivers world-class teaching alongside an internationally recognised research profile.

### Summary of FN2 proposals

Based on the staff population in scope for reduction, FN2 proposes:

- Reduction of academic staffing from 42.8 FTE to 31 FTE by 2029/30.
- Removal of 11.8 FTE overall.
- Reduction from 43 employees to 32 employees.
- Stated SSR increase from 14.3 to 19.5.
- Merger with other units to form a new School
- Relocation to the College of Science and Engineering

### Risks of FN2 proposals

#### *1. SSR targets threaten to undermine ESE*

Staffing reductions attached to FN2 would significantly undermine teaching workload requirements and weaken performance in key areas.

This staffing reduction would have a material impact on areas of ESE excellence including:

- A requirement to reverse the recent expansion of third-year optional module choice.
- An inability to provide meaningful small-group teaching across undergraduate years.
- Destabilizing pastoral and dissertation supervision (including the School's Open Door policy).
- Threaten recruitment based on league table criteria (Geography at UoN already has the highest SSR in the Russell Group).

### Alternative proposals

#### *1. Growth strategy*

##### **1.1 Remove recruitment cap on Geography with Business (L7N1) degree.**

This is a high growth area, with surging student demand, which would increase student numbers in the long-term. Geography with Business has a unique selling point (as one of only two similar degrees offered in the Russell Group) with growth potential aligned to high-tariff students. It has grown significantly from 20/21, where across the three years it had 132 students, to now over 176. It is estimated that without the cap this would increase by 30 students per year, meaning by 29/30 this would be another 90 students on L7N1 (270 in total).

## **1.2 Merge with Architecture as part of a new School situated in the College of Engineering and Science.**

Merging with Architecture presents several opportunities for the development of new undergraduate and postgraduate courses based on synergies in key areas related to the built environment, urban geography and climate change. This plan is being advanced by the School of Geography (and others) as part of a separate counter proposal. Parties see clear opportunities for rapid growth and in conjunction to the growth of the L7N1 course above, this could lead to a high-profile cross-college degree programme.

The UCU supports this growth strategy on the basis of maintaining the full breadth of the geographical discipline as part of this new school. This matches the expectations set by the Royal Geographical Society in terms of teaching human and physical geography in their entirety. Safeguarding and strengthening our unique selling points, including but not limited to cultural and historical geography, economic geography and political geography, within a College of Engineering and Science will not only maintain world-leading standards of research and teaching but also open up novel opportunities for interdisciplinary growth. For example, Appendix G of the Draft Business case itself mentions the key themes of “cultural, economic and environmental geography”, emphasising the importance of this breadth.

## **1.3 New ‘Future Cities’ PGT course.**

Development of new PGT courses aimed at international student recruitment. Drawing on core expertise across human and physical geography, new PGT courses can be developed in high growth areas aligned with rising international student demand, notably in areas related to environmental science, climate change and globalization.

In particular, a new PGT course focusing on ‘Future Cities’ would leverage cross-campus mobility to provide an attractive offer to three main student groups.

First, it will appeal to international students from a range of markets with Geography’s significant expertise in urban processes from the Global South. Leading staff in the school have longstanding, world-leading connections to India which can be used to leverage recruitment, as are the School’s connections with institutions in Singapore and China, and growth markets such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh. It is estimated this will bring in 20 international students.

Second, the School currently faces retention challenges for our final year UG students with our limited Human Geography-focused PGT offering. This course, with its grounding in the School’s strengths in Urban and Economic geography (the two biggest optional modules the school currently offers), responds to this student demand, and is estimated to retain 10 home students.

Third, and finally, the unique offering of the course - its connections with Architecture and Built Environment and inter-campus mobility - makes it competitive within the home PGT market and is estimated to bring in a further 10 students.

This provides a conservative estimate of 40 students and the course has been designed to complement the School's other PGT offerings which are much more focused on Physical Geography and sustainability. Optional modules can also then enhance the pre-existing offer.

### 1.4 Summary

The summary here points to a School with real growth potential, both at UG and PGT level. The school performs exceptionally well with NSS (ranked 14th in the Russell Group by subject mean score in 2025) and the proposals above conservatively estimate an increase of 70 UG and PGT students per year for the next three years. Alongside the natural attrition modelled below this points to the School easily achieving its target SSR of 19.5 without the need for any compulsory redundancies.

Based on these estimates - an increase of 30 students on UG Geography with Business and an increase of 40 students on PGT Urban Futures - the Table below provides further detail on projected student numbers within the School.

#### School of Geography Student Number Forecast (SNF) 24/25 to 29/30

	FY1 24/25	FY2 25/26	FY3 26/27	FY4 27/28	FY5 28/29	FY6 29/30
SNF	682	704	693	702	702	
SNF + Growth Strategy				770	800	830

Source: Actual SNF data extracted from UoN Tableau available [here](#).

### 2. Natural attrition

The school could generate significant savings without the need for compulsory redundancy through natural attrition over the course of the next four years. Given a reduction of 11 Research and Teaching FTE between 18/19 and 23/24, the school can reasonably expect a reduction of approximately 7.2 FTE between 25/26 and 29/30 (modelled at an expectation of 1.8 FTE reduction per year).

Estimated staff reduction from natural attrition by 2029/30: **7.2 FTE**

Estimated annual savings from natural attrition by 2029/30 (calculated at £90k per FTE): **£648,000**

Combining these rates of natural staff attrition with the prospected increase in student numbers following the proposed alternative growth strategy demonstrates how the School will comfortably achieve its target SSR of 19.5 by 29/30 without the need for compulsory redundancy. The Table below highlights this through student number forecasts shaped by the alternative growth strategy, combined with existing SSR and staff FTE data. Importantly, this Table does not and cannot yet include voluntary

redundancies. Any voluntary redundancies from 26/27 would immediately contribute to lowering staff FTE and increase the pace at which the School achieves its SSR target.

#### **School of Geography Student Number Forecast, Staff FTE and Student and Staff Ratio**

	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
SNF	682	704	693	770	800	830
Staff FTE	46	46	46	44.2	42.4	40.6
SSR	14.8	15.3	15.1	17.4	18.9	20.4

**Source:** Actual SNF data extracted from UoN Tableau available [here](#). SSR and Staff FTE for 24/25 extracted from FN2 Alternative Proposal supporting data available via SharePoint.

#### **Note on staff savings**

The inclusion of savings arising from voluntary retirement, voluntary severance, or natural attrition in this counterproposal does not constitute support for predetermined staff reduction targets. These assumptions are included solely to provide a realistic assessment of potential financial outcomes. Our preferred approach is to maximise savings through natural attrition and other non-pay measures while protecting employment. Furthermore, any reduction in staffing levels must be matched by a corresponding reduction in workload and activity expectations. The purpose of these proposals is to support the long-term sustainability of the School without increasing workload pressures on remaining staff or undermining its teaching and research mission. We categorically reject compulsory redundancies and do not support any scenario in which they form part of the School's future staffing strategy.

## School of Politics and International Relations

### General comments

We recognise the concerns identified in the FN2 business case regarding uneven student-staff ratios and the importance of delivering a 'high quality and equitable student experience' (FN2 Business Case, p. 12). We also acknowledge that high student-staff ratios can have negative consequences for teaching quality, student satisfaction, staff wellbeing and, ultimately, the reputation and competitiveness of the School. We note that student-staff ratios are not merely an internal workload metric but are also an important determinant of student experience and external reputation. For example, the Guardian University Guide allocates 15% of a subject's overall ranking score to student-staff ratios, reflecting the importance attached to staff contact and educational quality. According to last year's rankings, without the short-term support from Teaching Associates, at 24.7, we would have one of the highest SSR in the UK, and the highest in England. Indeed, any substantial increase in SSRs within the SPIR therefore risks undermining both the student experience and the School's competitive position in subject league tables. However, staff in the School were previously informed by the HoS that a sustainable target teaching ratio for the School lay within the University's proposed range of 18–22:1. We were therefore surprised to later learn that Politics may be expected to operate at significantly higher effective teaching ratios as a consequence of pressures elsewhere within Social Sciences. If FN2 is intended to address situations in which 'historical staffing patterns have reduced agility, contributing to inconsistent SSRs and an uneven student experience' and to create 'a more consistent educational experience' (FN2 Business Case, p. 10), then Politics should not be required to absorb disproportionate increases in workload or reductions in the student learning experience beyond those expected elsewhere. Rather, any revised staffing model should seek to maintain the principle of equity between Schools that underpins the FN2 business case itself.

More positively, we believe FN2 presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the School through the redeployment of colleagues from disciplines facing contraction elsewhere in the University. Areas such as American and Canadian Studies, Philosophy, Geography and History possess strong intellectual and curricular connections with Politics and International Relations. Retaining and integrating colleagues from these areas would preserve valuable institutional knowledge, sustain academic expertise within the University, and reduce the number of redundancies required to achieve the University's target SSRs across Social Sciences. It would also provide an opportunity to diversify and enhance the School's teaching and research profile through new interdisciplinary collaborations, broadened module provision, and the development of innovative programmes that draw upon expertise from across the humanities and social sciences. Where Schools are operating below the University's target SSR range, we feel strongly that consideration should be given to redeployment and academic integration before redundancies are pursued. Rather than viewing staffing reductions solely through the lens of

contraction, we believe FN2 offers an opportunity to reconfigure academic provision in ways that both preserve employment and create new educational opportunities for students.

## School of Sociology and Social Policy

### Outline

The School of Sociology and Social Policy (SSP) is a high-performing, interdisciplinary unit encompassing Criminology, Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Work, with strong rankings and research excellence (89% rated world-leading/internationally excellent in REF 2021). The FN2 proposal seeks to 'rebalance' staffing to align with student demand, expanding Criminology while reducing Sociology, and Social Work, and, disproportionately, Social Policy posts and capacity. This creates risks including disciplinary erosion, reduced research capacity, weakened civic engagement, and over-concentration of eggs in the Criminology basket. Our alternative proposal advocates protecting the integrity of Social Policy, integrating disciplines, using broader workforce metrics, and investing in research, teaching innovation, including distance learning, and external partnerships.

### The School of Sociology and Social Policy

The School of Sociology and Social Policy is a globally recognised academic unit bringing together four closely related and mutually reinforcing disciplines: Criminology, Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Work. The School consistently performs strongly in national league tables, reflecting both the quality of its teaching and the impact of its research. In *The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026*, the School is ranked 9th for Social Work and 13th for Criminology and Sociology in the UK. Similarly, in *The Complete University Guide 2026*, it is ranked 12th for Social Work and 11th for Social Policy.

The School offers a comprehensive portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate provision. At undergraduate level, students can enrol in single and joint honours programmes across Criminology, Sociology and Social Work. At postgraduate level, the School offers a range of taught Masters programmes, mostly centred on Social Policy but also including a programme in Criminology and Criminal Justice, alongside doctoral study options. These include both traditional research-focused PhDs and professional doctorates in Public Policy and Public Management, designed to bridge academic research and professional practice.

The School's research profile is equally strong. In the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), 89% of our research outputs were assessed as world-leading or internationally excellent, demonstrating the School's sustained contribution to advancing knowledge and shaping policy and practice. Research activity in the School is organised through five interdisciplinary research centres, each bringing together academic staff and postgraduate researchers with shared interests. These centres are aligned with overarching research themes that define the School's intellectual agenda: children and families; social work and adult social care; criminal justice; health and wellbeing; policy analysis; identities, mobilities and migration; work and inequalities; and science, knowledge, and society. Staff from the different disciplines in the School often belong to more than one of these centres as they are not discipline-specific. Collectively, this structure enables collaboration across disciplines and supports the School's contribution to tackling major societal challenges.

The School is host to the [Ann Craft Trust](#), which works to combat abuse of people with learning disabilities, and we have strong links to local, national and international communities.

## Summary of FN2 Proposal

A central element of the proposal is a reduction in academic roles to align with Student-Staff Ratio (SSR) targets. Alongside this, the proposal seeks to 'rebalance' staffing profiles to reflect areas of higher student demand.

In particular, FN2 proposes to expand staffing in Criminology by 4.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts, recognising its growing student recruitment strength. To offset this expansion and achieve a target SSR of 22:1, the proposal includes reductions of 7.8 FTE in Social Policy, 3.6 FTE in Sociology, and 0.8 FTE in Social Work. Where possible, staff at risk of redundancy in Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Work would be redeployed into newly created Criminology roles. If all Criminology vacancies are filled internally, the net reduction would be 8.2 FTE. External recruitment would only be pursued if insufficient internal candidates are appointable or willing to transfer.

The proposal also recognises that the School currently has a relatively low number of Level 7 (senior) staff. As a result, reductions are not expected at this level, in order to preserve the leadership and academic seniority required to sustain teaching, research, and strategic direction.

The proposal includes a reduction in posts on the teaching and curriculum pathway.

## Strategic risks under FN2

The current FN2 proposal positions Social Policy largely as a residual category within a demand-driven framework, rather than recognising it as a core strategic discipline. This creates a number of interconnected risks affecting academic sustainability, research performance, civic mission, and long-term resilience.

### **Risk 1: Structural disinvestment in Social Policy**

The proposed reduction of 7.8 FTE in Social Policy represents a significant shift of resources towards Criminology. While this reflects immediate recruitment trends, it risks structurally weakening Social Policy as a core SHAPE discipline. Potential consequences include fragmentation across SSP's intellectual base, reduced capacity for policy-relevant teaching and research, and a diminished pipeline into postgraduate study and externally funded projects. Importantly, demand for Social Policy is often cyclical, meaning short-term trends may not reflect long-term value.

### **Risk 2: Misalignment with civic mission**

SSP plays a key role in supporting evidence-based policymaking and maintaining partnerships with public and third-sector organisations. Disproportionate reductions in Social Policy risk weakening these relationships, reducing the pipeline for REF Impact Case Studies, and undermining alignment with key policy agendas such as inequality, welfare, health, and migration. This creates a tension between the University's civic mission and its internal resource allocation.

### **Risk 3: Over-concentration on Criminology**

While investment in Criminology is justified by current demand, over-expansion introduces portfolio risk. A concentration in a single high-demand area increases vulnerability to fluctuations in student recruitment. It also reduces the diversity of the School's academic offer, making it less resilient in the longer term.

#### **Risk 4: Loss of research capacity**

Social Policy contributes significantly to interdisciplinary research, Impact Case Studies, and external funding. Reductions risk disrupting research clusters, weakening grant capture capacity, and negatively affecting future REF performance. This sits uneasily alongside the stated aim of protecting research excellence.

#### **Risk 5: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) implications**

Social Policy often has higher participation from women and minoritised groups and plays an important role in EDI-related research. Reductions may therefore have disproportionate demographic impacts, raising reputational concerns, affecting internal culture, and potentially undermining institutional commitments to EDI.

#### **Risk 6: Sustainability of new programmes**

The School has recently introduced new programmes. These include the new Master of Public Administration and MA Global Social and Public Policy, which have run for the first time this year. A great deal of effort, time and expertise has been contributed by staff to design and develop state of the art modules, with, in many cases, teaching grounded in specialised research. Loss of staff expertise risks these new programmes not being given sufficient time to bed in, target marketing efforts and increase recruitment.

### **Alternative Proposals**

#### ***Strategic rebalancing without disciplinary erosion***

A revised approach would maintain financial discipline while avoiding structural erosion of social policy, and include:

#### **Redistributing proposed investment in growth**

Support expansion in Criminology through vacancy management, natural attrition, and phased growth rather than cuts to Social Policy.

#### **Integrating Social Policy across programmes**

Embed Social Policy into Criminology and interdisciplinary pathways, positioning it as complementary rather than residual.

#### **Adopting multi-metric workforce planning**

Move beyond SSR as the sole metric by incorporating research income, REF contribution, impact

potential, and civic engagement into workforce decisions. Recognise different SSR requirements to deliver undergraduate and post graduate teaching.

### ***Social Policy investment strategy***

A complementary strategy would reposition Social Policy as a strategic institutional asset.

#### **Strategic aim:**

To ensure Social Policy continues to support research excellence, civic engagement, diversified recruitment, and long-term sustainability.

#### **Guiding principles:**

- Maintain a viable discipline
- Use portfolio-based planning beyond SSR
- Promote integration rather than fragmentation
- Avoid zero-sum resource allocation

#### **Core investment pillars:**

##### **Protect and grow**

Reduce planned cuts to sustain teaching provision, postgraduate pathways, and REF-critical research areas.

##### **Embed in growth areas**

Integrate Social Policy into Criminology and interdisciplinary programmes to capture latent demand and enhance curriculum coherence.

##### **Reconfigure teaching provision**

Streamline modules into shared pathways and cross-School delivery models, maintaining intellectual breadth while improving efficiency.

##### **Deliver new international distance learning**

The Executive MA in Public Policy (EMPP), which was collaboratively designed by five Schools within the Faculty of Social Sciences, led by members of the Social Policy Team in the School of Sociology and Social Policy in response to an Invitation to Tender by the UK Civil Service, could be tailored for and offered as distance learning to senior civil service policy makers around the world.

The EMPP was designed to fully align with the Policy Profession Standards framework. Its structure reflects the framework's three core domains: analysis and use of evidence, politics and democracy, and policy delivery. Each domain is supported by two 20-credit modules, collectively developing competencies to level three, alongside a 60-credit Capstone project, totalling 180 credits. Teaching is designed to be problem-driven and interdisciplinary. While our bid was ultimately unsuccessful after reaching the final two and losing after interview to the incumbents, the programme would considerably broaden the School's reach into the international market.

### **Strengthen research and impact**

Target investment in policy-relevant themes, protect key research roles, and support impact development and grant capture.

### **Expand civic partnerships**

Develop relationships with local authorities, health services, and third-sector organisations, alongside policy labs and professional development activity.

### **Strategic workforce planning**

Prioritise redeployment, retraining, and interdisciplinary capability, supported by vacancy control and natural attrition to minimise redundancies.

### ***MA Social Work***

This alternative proposal requests that the MA Social Work programme remains suspended and not be permanently closed, for a period of 3-5 years. The programme is nationally excellent, socially vital, and strategically aligned with the University's civic mission. Over the past decade numbers recruited to the programme have dropped as the UK Government prioritised non-university graduate entry to the social work profession. This trend is now reversing with the closure of Think Ahead - one major non-HEI route to qualifying as a social worker - announced in summer 2025. Colleagues at NTU and other universities are reporting an uptick in applications for their programmes. Ongoing suspension carries no financial cost and retains our potential for future growth.

MA Social Work has been taught at the University of Nottingham for over 70 years. The programme is professionally validated, regionally vital, strongly aligned with widening participation commitments, and strategically positioned within a changing national qualification landscape. In the 2024 Social Work England inspection cycle, only 48 of 256 programmes were approved with no conditions. Both Nottingham's BA and MA Social Work programmes achieved this status, placing them in the top 19% nationally.

The programme attracts high proportions of students from minoritised, disabled, neurodivergent, and low-income backgrounds and delivers exceptional value-added outcomes, with high completion and distinction rates. It provides a long-standing workforce pipeline to local authorities across the East Midlands and further afield.

### **Estimated staff savings from natural attrition by 2029/30 without compulsory redundancy**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>FTE</b>
2021	81	75
2022	99	77
2023	116	88
2024	93	88
2025 (FN2 data)	58	55.3
Based on the trend from 2023 to 2025, headcount natural attrition rate is 29% (high) FTE natural attrition rate is 20.7 (high). Based on the trend		

from 2021, headcount natural attrition rate is 10.5% (low), FTE natural attrition is 14.1% (low)		
2026 (FN 2 proposed)	55	50.1
2027 (FN2 proposed)	52	47.1
2026 (Natural attrition proposed)	From 41(high) to 52(low)	From 43.8 (high) to 47.5 (low)
2027 (Natural attrition proposed)	From 29 (high) to 46	From 34.7 (high) to 40.8 (low)

Since 2023, the staff headcount and FTE within the School of Sociology and Social Policy have reached their highest levels and have subsequently shown a gradual decline. Analysis of workforce data over the past five years suggests that the lowest observed natural attrition rate was 10.5% for headcount and 14.1% for FTE, representing a scenario in which the fewest staff leave the School. Previous research has estimated turnover for academics in permanent positions to be in the range of 8-11% (Edenred, 2022; UCEA, 2019). Based on these trends, SSP could potentially achieve the proposed staffing targets for both headcount and FTE within two years through natural attrition alone, without the need for a compulsory redundancy (CR) process.

The workforce data also demonstrate that SSP expanded significantly between 2021 and 2023, with headcount increasing from 81 to 116 and FTE increasing from 75 to 88. Although staffing levels have declined since the 2023 peak, the School’s student number remains substantially larger than it was in 2021. This suggests that workforce adjustment is already taking place through natural attrition.

It is also important to recognise that SSP supports a broad and interdisciplinary teaching portfolio. Teaching delivery is highly integrated across disciplinary boundaries, with colleagues contributing not only to Sociology and Social Policy programmes but also to teaching delivered within Criminology and Social Work. Consequently, reductions in SSP staffing may have wider implications beyond Sociology and Social Policy itself, affecting teaching capacity across multiple programmes and subject areas within the School.

The available data show that both headcount and FTE have already been declining since 2023, while the proportion of part-time staff has continued to decrease. These trends suggest that workforce adjustment is already occurring through natural attrition and changes in staffing composition.

In conclusion, the workforce data suggest that SSP could potentially achieve the proposed staffing reductions through natural attrition within a relatively short period, without the need for compulsory redundancies. The evidence indicates that headcount and FTE have already been declining since 2023, demonstrating that workforce adjustment is already taking place. Given SSP's significant interdisciplinary contribution across Sociology, Social Policy, Criminology and Social Work, any further reductions should be considered carefully in light of their wider implications. The available data suggest that natural attrition may provide a viable mechanism for achieving workforce adjustment while minimising disruption to staff and reducing the risks and significant harms associated with compulsory redundancies. Such an approach would help maintain staff morale and the student experience, both of which are important contributors to institutional reputation, league table performance, and global standing. Protecting these strengths is particularly important in an increasingly competitive recruitment

environment, where reputation directly influences student demand. Any negative impact on recruitment may in turn create additional financial pressures, potentially undermining the long-term sustainability that the proposed reductions are intended to support.

Edenred (2022). Employee trends 2022 [online] Available at:  
<https://content.edenred.co.uk/b2b/content/Edenred-employee-2022-trends-research-report.pdf>.

Universities and Colleges Employers Association (2019). Higher Education Workforce Report 2019. [online] Available at: <https://www.ucea.ac.uk/library/publications/he-workforce-report-2019/#>.

# APM

## Summary of FN2 proposals

There are 3 main areas of APM changes proposed in FN2 that we are covering in this counterproposal, and one area that is noted as missing and is also of concern.

- EDI Role Changes
- Health and Safety Role Changes
- School Management Role Changes
- Level 1 - 5 APM role changes and restructuring are not included.

Additionally there are some pooling concerns on some APM roles.

## EDI Risks

### 1. Staff and Student EDI Fragmentation

The current proposals establish new capacity for staff-facing EDI without a corresponding increase in student-focused support at the College level.

This approach risks Colleges pursuing disconnected agendas despite the inherent overlap in areas such as:

- Institutional culture and sense of belonging.
- Addressing discrimination and harassment.
- Disability and inclusion support.
- Ethnicity and race-related outcomes.
- Initiatives for gender equality.
- Participation and representation levels.

**Risk:** A diminished capacity to implement holistic solutions across the wider College community.

### 2. Insufficient Capacity for Student EDI Implementation

While staff EDI resources are increased, the proposal fails to provide Colleges with the dedicated expertise required to deliver student-facing EDI priorities.

This imbalance may lead to a scenario where:

- Local support is dedicated solely to staff initiatives.
- Student agendas rely on central resources or individual goodwill.

**Risk:** Delayed progress on student priorities and inconsistent support levels between different Colleges.

### 3. Diminished Local Ownership of EDI

By managing these roles within HR rather than the Colleges themselves, EDI may be perceived as an external service rather than an internally owned responsibility.

**Risk:** Poor integration with College-level governance, planning, and core decision-making.

### 4. Functional Duplication with HR

The new roles would operate alongside existing functions, such as:

- EDI Advisors within HR.
- HR Business Partners.
- Other specialist Human Resources teams.

Stakeholders may struggle to navigate these overlaps without a clearly defined and differentiated remit.

**Risk:** Inefficient resource use, role confusion, and duplicated efforts.

### 5. Reduced Sensitivity to College Contexts

Individual Colleges face unique challenges regarding:

- The demographics of the student body.
- Staffing demographics.
- Accreditation and professional requirements.
- Disciplinary and research cultures.
- Issues specific to the academic field.

Centrally managed models are often less responsive to these shifting local priorities.

**Risk:** Slower implementation and reduced agility when addressing targeted interventions.

### 6. Implementation Gaps in Strategic Delivery

Central teams excel at policy development, but local leadership is vital for successful delivery on the ground.

**Risk:** A robust institutional strategy paired with inadequate local capacity to drive College-level action.

### 7. Compromising the New College Model Opportunity

The transition to Colleges provides a prime opportunity to embed EDI into leadership and planning structures.

Isolating these roles externally limits their ability to become an integral part of the new College framework.

**Risk:** Missing a key strategic opportunity to strengthen the new College architecture.

#### **8. Absence of a Unified College Contact Point**

The current proposal requires Colleges to maintain separate engagements with multiple teams, including:

- HR-based EDI.
- Student-facing EDI.
- Research-specific EDI.
- Access and Participation Plan functions.
- Various other specialist departments.

**Risk:** Unnecessary complexity and a lack of coordination in EDI activities.

#### **Summary of Strategic Risks**

The current model improves staff EDI support but risks creating a significant imbalance between staff and student provision at the College level. This may prevent Colleges from delivering the integrated coordination required for their communities, resulting in functional duplication while leaving gaps in local implementation.

In contrast, a College-embedded EDI Partner model would offer a single point of coordination, bridging institutional expertise with local delivery across both staff and student agendas.

#### **Risk: Reduced Diversity of EDI Leadership and Expertise**

The proposed requirement for APVC EDI roles to be held exclusively by academic colleagues may significantly narrow the pool of potential candidates and exclude experienced professional services staff with substantial expertise in EDI leadership, organisational change, student experience, research culture, HR, governance, and strategy.

#### **Potential impacts include:**

- Reduced access to a diverse range of leadership experiences and perspectives.
- Exclusion of individuals with specialist EDI knowledge and established track records of delivering institutional change.
- Increased reliance on a smaller recruitment pool, potentially creating succession and capacity challenges.
- Reduced opportunities to reflect the collaborative nature of EDI work, which often spans academic, professional services, student, research, and community contexts.
- A perception that EDI leadership is an academic responsibility rather than a shared institutional endeavour.

**Risk:** The University may inadvertently limit its ability to appoint the most suitable EDI leaders by focusing on contract type rather than expertise, experience, and ability to deliver outcomes.

**Mitigation:** Consider retaining flexibility for EDI leadership appointments to be made from either academic or professional services staff, based on capability, credibility, and the needs of the role.

## **EDI Alternative Proposal**

### **Proposed Alternative Model: College EDI Partners**

The proposed College EDI roles should be embedded within College structures rather than within Human Resources. These roles would operate as dedicated **EDI Partners**, aligned to and working closely with College APVCs responsible for EDI, whilst maintaining strong functional relationships with the central EDI teams for staff (HR) and students (Student and Campus Life).

Under this model, central EDI teams would continue to provide specialist expertise, strategic oversight, and escalation routes, while College EDI Partners would provide local coordination, implementation, and contextual support within individual Colleges.

This proposal does not require additional resource. Rather, it seeks to position the proposed resource where it can most effectively support delivery, accountability, and progress within the newly established College structures.

Unlike the current proposal, these roles would **support both staff and student EDI agendas**, recognising that Colleges are responsible for the experience, culture, progression, and success of both staff and students, and that many EDI challenges require integrated approaches across these communities.

This proposal responds to a need frequently identified by existing Faculty EDI Directors for dedicated College-based EDI capacity that can support both staff and student EDI priorities. In practice, many College EDI challenges and initiatives do not sit neatly within either a staff-only or student-only remit, and effective delivery often requires coordinated action across both communities.

To ensure clarity of purpose and avoid role drift, College EDI Partners would have clearly defined EDI responsibilities and professional alignment to both the staff EDI function within HR and the student EDI function within SCL. This would ensure that the roles remain focused on EDI outcomes and priorities rather than broader College administrative activity.

The purpose of these roles would not be to replicate the specialist support already provided by HR EDI Advisors, HR Business Partners, or the Student EDI team. Instead, they would provide dedicated College-level capacity to coordinate, implement, and drive progress against College-specific EDI priorities, acting as strategic partners to APVCs, Schools, Departments, HR colleagues, SCL, and central EDI teams.

### **Key Responsibilities**

- Supporting the development and delivery of College EDI action plans.
- Coordinating College responses to University EDI strategic priorities.
- Identifying and addressing College-specific EDI challenges and opportunities.

- Connecting staff and student EDI activity to ensure a coherent and holistic approach.
- Supporting local governance, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of EDI activity.
- Facilitating collaboration between Colleges and central specialist EDI functions.
- Supporting College submissions and action plans relating to initiatives such as Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter, Access and Participation Plans, and discipline-specific EDI priorities.

### **Professional Community and Governance**

College EDI Partners would be supported through the further development of an existing University-wide EDI practitioner network, bringing together HR EDI colleagues, the Student EDI team, the Nottingham EDI in Research Hub, Access and Participation Plan colleagues, and other relevant partners.

This community of practice would provide:

- Consistency of approach across the University.
- Peer support and professional development.
- Sharing of effective practice.
- Alignment with institutional priorities.
- Access to specialist expertise where required.

This approach would balance local responsiveness with institutional consistency.

### **Strategic Benefits**

Embedding these roles within Colleges would strengthen local ownership and accountability for EDI, allowing Colleges to develop and implement action plans that respond to their specific contexts whilst contributing to the University's overall strategic objectives.

For example, Colleges would be better positioned to address discipline-specific challenges relating to representation, progression, attainment, belonging, recruitment, retention, and research culture, including those commonly experienced within STEM disciplines.

This model would provide Colleges with dedicated EDI capacity focused on implementation and delivery whilst retaining and building upon the specialist expertise already available through existing HR and Student EDI structures.

### **Key Benefits**

- Strengthens EDI support for APVCs and College leadership teams.
- Provides dedicated capacity for implementation, coordination, and delivery.
- Creates a joined-up, agile, and holistic approach across staff and student EDI.
- Maximises the impact of existing investment by aligning resource to College priorities.
- Fills a local implementation gap rather than duplicating central expertise.
- Improves accountability, responsiveness, and measurable outcomes.

- Enables Colleges to address discipline-specific EDI challenges within a shared institutional framework.
- Strengthens the connection between University strategy and College-level delivery.
- Establishes a stronger University-wide EDI practitioner community linking staff, student, research, and knowledge exchange agendas.

### **Example of alternative in practice**

Changes in the external legal, regulatory, or policy landscape often require both central expertise and local implementation. For example, following the Supreme Court ruling relating to the definition of sex under the Equality Act and the subsequent development of guidance by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), central EDI teams would work with Legal Services, Universities UK, Advance HE, HR, Student and Campus Life, and other relevant stakeholders to understand the implications for the University and develop an institutionally consistent approach.

Once the University's position and guidance had been agreed, College EDI Partners would work with APVCs, Schools, Departments, HR colleagues, and student-facing teams to support implementation within their respective College contexts. This could include:

- Assessing the potential impact of the changes on staff and students within the College.
- Supporting communication and engagement with College stakeholders.
- Identifying discipline-specific considerations and operational challenges.
- Coordinating any required updates to College-level action plans, guidance, or local processes.
- Supporting managers, academic leaders, and student-facing colleagues to understand and implement institutional guidance.
- Escalating emerging issues, risks, or questions back to central specialist teams where required.
- Monitoring implementation and providing feedback on practical challenges and opportunities.

For example, the implications and associated discussions may differ significantly between Colleges with large clinical, laboratory, professional practice, registration requirements, placement-based, or student-facing environments and those operating in different disciplinary contexts. College EDI Partners would provide local expertise and coordination to ensure that University guidance was implemented consistently whilst remaining responsive to local circumstances.

This model enables the University to maintain a consistent institutional position, informed by specialist expertise and legal advice, whilst ensuring that implementation is responsive to the differing needs, cultures, and operational realities of individual Colleges.

### **Summary**

This proposal does not seek to create additional EDI expertise. Rather, it seeks to create dedicated College-level capacity to implement, coordinate, and deliver EDI priorities in a way that existing central functions are not currently positioned to provide.

The currently proposed EDI roles, EDI Advisors (based in HR, but aligned to Colleges) would be better embedded into the College structure, working closely with APVCs responsible for EDI. These EDI Partners for Colleges would be work across student and staff EDI in the colleges.

Critically, these new roles, EDI Partners, would not be to replicate the specialist support already provided through Student EDI, HR EDI Advisors, or HR Business Partners. Rather, they would provide dedicated College-level capacity to coordinate, deliver, and progress College-specific EDI priorities, working closely with APVCs, Schools, Departments, HR, SCL, and central EDI teams.

These College-based EDI Partner roles will be supported through the development of a wider EDI practitioner community within the University of Nottingham that brings together the HR EDI team, the SCL EDI team and key partners in this work, for example the Nottingham EDI in Research Hub and Access and Participation Plan.

These roles being based in colleges will also allow Colleges to implement and develop action plans aligned to the University's overall EDI strategic priorities in their specific context. For example, to address the specific EDI challenges in STEM subjects.

EDI roles currently being put into HR could be moved safely under the college structure and the APVCs responsible for EDI. These roles could mix staff and student EDI lowering the risk of EDI being an issue at a student level, and relieving extra pressure on central EDI.

This approach also works to have colleges themselves be more directly responsible for EDI consistency across staff and students, especially when many of the college activities affect both groups at once.

### **Health and Safety Workload Risks**

The approach to Health and Safety (H&S) roles in Colleges is a focus on the coverage of central H&S policy implementation. However the implementation is reliant on a large amount of APM and TS staff who have partial FTE assigned to H&S as part of their role. There is a major risk of the amount of staff lost to TS or to be lost in an APM restructure will have large gaps in provision for basic H&S coverage in multifaceted areas with teaching and research labs and complex equipment.

Especially noted is the fact there is no outline of these risks in the business case nor the calculated impact on H&S from the loss of staff in TS, even at a rough level. The assumption that TS staff can be lost to save money at the risk of H&S provision is very worrying. The remaining staff and whether or not their workload can support H&S at all has not been covered in the business case and is a red flag for these changes to take place without proper assessment of these big changes.

There is also a significant risk that R&T and APM roles cover H&S and changes to them (redundancies and future restructuring) will also hamper H&S efforts since they have undocumented H&S safety critical roles which are not included in role profiles and are down to local arrangement (eg Lab Safety Monitors).

Finally there is a risk around the workload of the different colleges since there are distinctly more complex areas of H&S in Health and Science & Engineering colleges. This doesn't seem to be accounted for in the generic role profiles with no specialist area domain knowledge being listed as being required or even advantageous. If workload is actually too high, or any of these roles in those colleges are off on long term sick, or leave the University, there is simply a huge gap in capacity in the provision of H&S in the University and this may affect day-to-day H&S provision negatively.

### **Health and Safety Alternative Proposal**

A ground up Health and Safety workload evaluation across TS, R&T and APM is required to take place, and where it is noted Health and Safety provision is going to drop in real terms while the number of classes, labs, equipment and students stays consistent, it needs to be readily identified and explained clearly and when such activities may have to stop due to the risks involved, note the detriment to teaching and research at the University.

If this is not undertaken then there will be legal and ethical concerns at the highest level that intentional H&S reduction was undertaken and will be a huge factor in any H&S incidents that reported to the Health and Safety Executive.

A plan needs to be considered to increase H&S time of those remaining staff or evidence needs to be provided that the workload will not increase to unsustainable levels.

Additionally the H&S roles in College of Health and College of Science and Engineering, need to be reassessed and potentially additional roles added to cover such large complex areas else again workload will be unsustainable putting us at entirely unnecessary legal H&S risks.

Finally an assessment of those areas that commonly "fall between the cracks" such as research groups that span Medicine and Science faculties currently or those running spinouts that operate with a need for H&S oversight, need to be considered and be part of the FN2 plan in clear terms.

### **School Management**

#### **Missing Head of Operations Roles**

There is a lack of School-level manager roles compared to the proposed College structures itself with schools 3 missing Head of Operations roles, 1 in each College. Nothing in any document points to which schools will go without such a manager, and the role profile only suggests running a single School unit. There are no references in the FN2 papers on how this will work in practice.

#### **Risk: Lack of responsible and accountable management for 3 Schools**

The schools without Head of Operations roles will be missing coverage of what the roles undertake, especially in relation to being responsible and accountable for several key areas according to the job profile such as HR, governance, performance, compliance, budgets, implementing College strategy and feeding into strategy.

### **Alternative Proposal: 3 Roles to fill the gaps**

The immediate recommendation would be to simply extend the Head of Operations (School) roles to be 1 more in each College to correctly match the School quantities. This would solve the workload and work coverage issues and not need having one Head of Operations to cover two or more schools.

### **Better understanding of the APM6 and 7 roles in the College and School structures**

The organisation of roles under these management roles even at APM level 5 has not been decided, and the role profiles have been revised with much more vague wording on what day to day work will be undertaken and be accountable in the level 6 and level 7 Head of Operations roles.

The differing amount of complexity between the Colleges and Schools is also not accounted for in the role profiles, meaning it is unclear what these roles are expected to do in the distinctly different areas they will oversee.

### **Risk: Without any clear information there is a large risk of gaps in work that is achievable, or what each role is expected to do**

The amount of work and whether it is accomplishable is not known with these changes since there is no means of determining accountability between Head of Operations at the College or School level, and APM 1-5 roles, leading to a large risk of gaps in what is achievable with no team structures outlined or clear lines of responsibility and accountability. There is a risk of level 4 and 5 staff having responsibility added to their roles inappropriately.

### **Alternative Proposal: Add lines of accountability and revised role profiles alongside information on School/College specific areas**

Within the new structures it needs to be clear where lines of accountability fall and particularly where task areas intersect:

- Centrally
- College
- School
- ESE
- RKE
- Core Operations

Currently many aspects of core operations fall to School (or sometimes Faculty based) staff. These span but are not limited to Estates (building checks), Health and Safety, HR, Recruitment some non-standard ESE work that cannot be standardised (e.g. admissions work for PSRB, placements, signed and stamped agreements). Many of these areas are missing in the new role profiles and it is not clear where these accountabilities lie. There are decision making and accountabilities at the Faculty level that are not accounted for in the role profiles of the College equivalent roles.

As the new structures are worked through with alignment of roles it needs to be made clear on why it makes things better, it will be very easy to be distracted by getting the new structures right (i.e. the what) and not the why.

The role profiles should be revised with a clearer vision of what the responsibilities are, alongside a supporting document not just outlining the proposed structure (with nothing underneath) but with a clearer link with existing workloads and interactions with the above areas, alongside what area-specific tasks are required. Without this the risk of these roles missing critical areas is high given the differences between existing role profiles and the new ones, but with a revision it should remove much of the uncertainty.

Additionally the APM 1 - 5 TOM needs to be clarified to support the changes to APM 6 and 7 staff as per other risks outlined for those areas.

### **APM Continuity Plans**

There are no continuity plans outlined for how current School and Faculty roles will be lost and some into a college structure at the same time as the staff they will ultimately manage will not move immediately. The timelines are not outlined clearly, nor is there information on how staff existing School and Faculty roles will be covered when they have left them.

**Risk: People will move too early, or too late, leaving large gaps in provision of work, leading to issues around accountability**

This leaves risks around coverage of critical duties those roles currently perform in the middle of a redundancy programme of academic staff in those very areas.

### **Alternative Proposal: Have plans for continuity in FN2**

The FN2 document could have a section on the transition plan with a timeline of when the roles will be started, how the transition period will work, and when the final working practice will be finished. This will lead to greater clarity for the role holders but more importantly for everyone else who relies on those roles currently.

### **APM 1 - 5 Staff Changes**

As noted in the School Management risks there is a huge area of staff missing from the proposals and that is any APM role outside of those being in scope for redundancy. All APM 1 - 5 roles are now in a limbo with the new structures needing to be in place by September 2027. The lack of information presumes that these risks will need to be accounted for and should be prioritised with a way forward in tandem with the Unions to understand how roles will change and on what timeline with an opportunity to address the risks of not including this work in FN2.

The university's own FN1 review committed to: Readiness assessment before implementation. Tailored communication for different staff groups. Earlier union involvement. Acknowledging uncertainty rather than masking it. None of these commitments are being met for faculty APM L1-5 staff.

This work needs to be undertaken at some stage, the requests generally are to move this forward and document how it will be done so it is made clearer for staff and the Unions so feedback can be provided at the earliest opportunity.

### **Movement of Roles without Organisational Structure or Target Operating Model**

The university is moving from 5 faculties to 3 colleges. All L6 and L7 APM leadership roles have been deleted and replaced with new ones. Faculty APM staff at Levels 1-5 have been told their roles will be transitioned, but no detail has been published on what that means.

#### **Risk: Legal exposure from unmanaged contractual variation**

L4 and L5 are generalist roles. The new structure is built around functional specialism. Without a clear process for mapping hybrid roles, the university cannot impose changes to role content without individual consent. Doing so risks constructive dismissal claims.

#### **Alternative Proposal: Publish a Target Operating Model before September 2026**

Set out what sits at college, school and central level. Specify what happens to the L5 tier. Address how hybrid L4 roles map onto the new functional streams. Identify what changes to work will be undertaken centrally, at college and at school level. Identify what local requirements that are needed in each college or school (especially legal requirements). Outline what central teams will be accountable for that no longer falls to school staff to undertake. Outline what role profiles will be, with a view that generic role profiles are not suitable for many of the tasks APM roles in Schools undertake.

Without this, College Directors will make decisions in the dark, and staff in the roles currently will be unable to feed back on the model.

### **APM Capacity**

Faculty APM teams are already carrying capacity deficits from FN1. The hiring freeze, MARS, one-year FTC restrictions, and vacancy freeze left teams below sustainable staffing before VR began. Some teams have lost more than 50% of staff since, through a combination of VR, FTC endings, and post-VR resignations. Overtime is being used to cover gaps that cannot continue.

#### **Risk: Service failure during transition**

The 10-month implementation window assumes teams are at full strength. They are not. Resource modelling is only 60% complete (March 2026 figures) and is not due until September 2026 - the same month the Final Business Case is approved. Capacity will be assessed too late to change anything.

#### **Alternative Proposal: Baseline capacity assessment across all 5 faculties**

Publish current FTE against pre-FN1 establishment for all faculty APM teams. Model the cumulative cost of FN1 and FN2 capacity impact before the panel assesses financial viability. The university holds this data. UCU does not.

### **Generalist Role Changes**

UCU represents L4 and L5 staff. UNISON represents L1-3. L1-3 roles are more functionally specific and will transition more recognisably into the new structure. L4 and L5 are generalists covering governance, finance, HR, research support and student experience in a single post. The new structure has no published place for them.

### **Risk: Loss of experienced staff the university needs most**

Experienced generalist managers are unlikely to accept a narrowed specialist role in a larger unit with no VR option and no formal consultation right. Post-VR attrition is already happening. The conditions driving it have not changed. Implementation without a retention strategy will accelerate it. The outcomes of this may be losing roles that do particularly legally required or operational work adding to implementation risks.

### **Alternative Proposal: Formal role mapping exercise with union involvement**

Map every L4 and L5 role to the new structure before implementation decisions are made. Where a role spans multiple functional streams, set out how it resolves and on what contractual basis. Agree a framework for handling material changes that require individual consent that involves the Unions (to be discussed at a later date).

### **Exclusion from FN2 Engagement and Consultation**

Faculty and School APM staff were excluded from meaningful consultation in FN1 because the formal scope was central teams. They are now excluded from meaningful consultation in FN2 because the formal scope is L6 and L7. The same sequencing that shut them out last time is being repeated. The university's own FN1 review identified this problem and committed to address it.

### **Risk: Decisions made without the people who understand the work**

The implementation planning workshops are being shaped by L6 and L7 colleagues whose roles are being deleted and who have a personal interest in how functions are redistributed. L4 and L5 colleagues, who understand the operational reality, are not in the room. Decisions made without them will be worse decisions, especially as roles commonly drift from written role profiles.

### **Alternative Proposal: L4 and L5 representation in implementation planning from the first workshop**

The timeline is short on having engagement and consultation and should be included in the FN2 document to outline how the TOM and engagement on it will happen. The university has already invited L5 Senior Operations Managers to the first workshop. The same logic applies to L4. Include them from

the start, not after decisions are made. Also designate a named APM implementation contact for L1-5 colleagues for queries about their current/future work and current/future role.

### **Sizing of School and College Inequalities**

College Directors will be appointed from October 2026 and asked to lead APM implementation across the new structures by August 2027. There is no published benchmark for how many APM staff a college or school of a given size should have. Decisions about team sizes will be made on inherited assumptions with no shared standard.

### **Risk: Existing inequalities reproduced at college level**

Without a shared staffing benchmark, College Directors will default to inherited structures. Faculties that were already understaffed going into FN2 will remain understaffed. The inconsistency FN2 was meant to address will be locked in for another cycle.

### **Alternative Proposal: A published APM to academic staff or student FTE ratio before implementation begins**

Drawn from sector benchmarking, give College Directors a shared baseline to work from so decisions about team sizes are evidence-based and consistent, not inherited. This is also the only way to assess after the fact whether the transition was fair. A before and after picture should be provided to staff and the Unions and allowed to have feedback provided where areas of concern are raised.